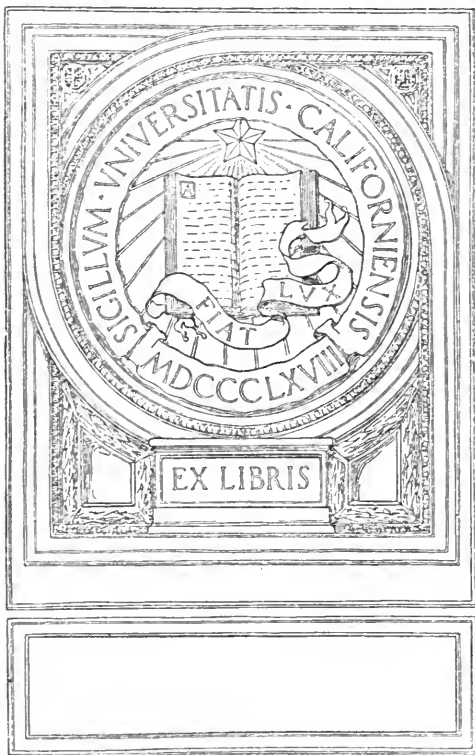
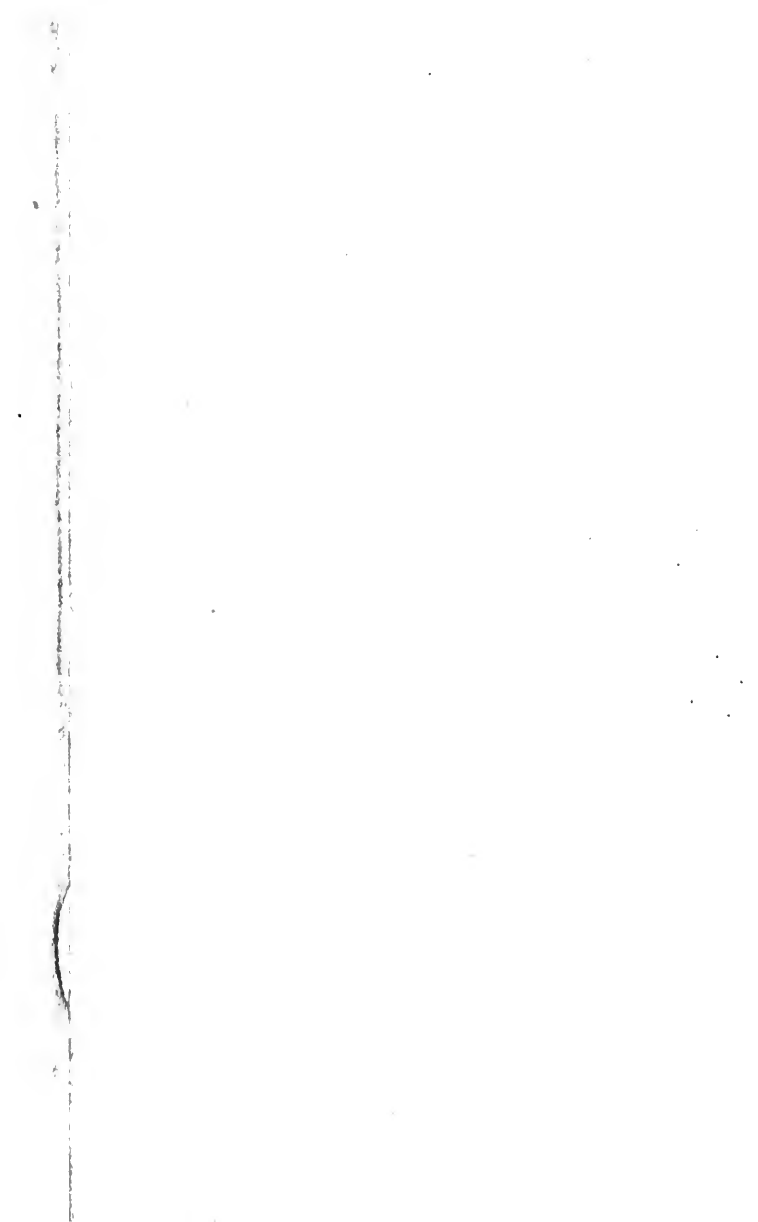




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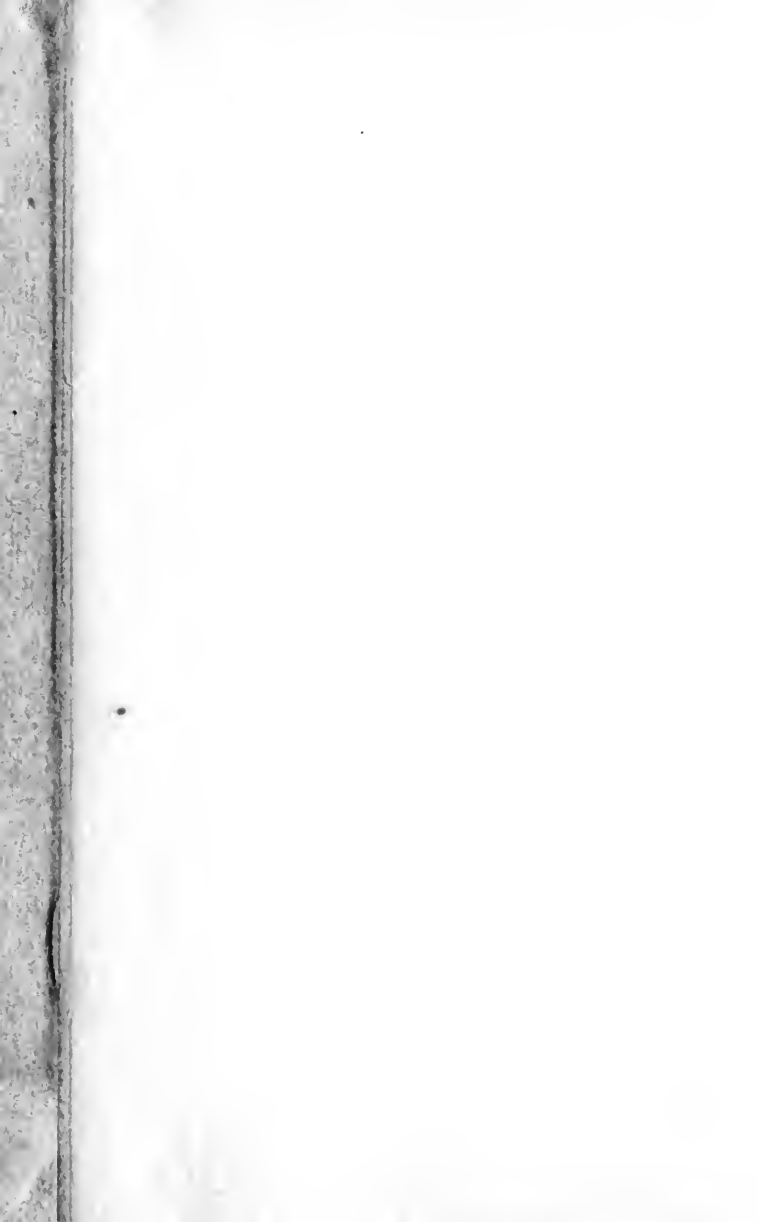








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# THE GREAT EPICS

OF

## MEDIÆVAL GERMANY.

An Outline of their Contents and History.

BY

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TO  
  
WILLIAM F. WARREN,

PRESIDENT OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY,

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

By the Author.



## PREFACE.

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THE period of the Middle Ages has been graphically designated by Ludwig Uhland as a night of a thousand years. Yet, as the great poet remarked, this night was illuminated by brilliant stars. It will be our object to cast a glance at some of them, and see how their light shone through the darkness which enshrouded all Europe at that memorable epoch. The very life and soul of nations, and particularly of ancient nations, is expressed in their poetry; thus, when we attempt to study the very life and soul of Mediæval Germany, and try to grasp its world of ideas, we must turn to its poetry.

As is indicated on the titlepage, only the great epics of Mediæval Germany will be considered in this volume, and nothing but an outline of their contents and history is to be given. Such a sketch ought to be the mirror in which the main features of the subject are faithfully reflected; in fact, in

whatever manner we may endeavor to call up before our eyes the picture of the past, it is only through a mirror, as it were, that we can behold its living forms.

Although no claim is made to present here anything like a history of Mediæval German poetry, it will be found that the subject, as it comes within the scope of the plan announced, has been more fully treated on the following pages than in any work hitherto published in this country or in England. It is believed that the space and consideration devoted to the poems are in just proportion to their importance. The Introduction is intended to convey merely the most indispensable information in regard to Old German poetry. In the remarks on the *Nibelungen Lied* and on *Gudrun*, I am of course under general obligations to the works of the great scholars who made a specialty of the subject. Whenever I have been particularly indebted to any one, the fact has been stated in the proper place. It will be sufficient here to refer to the well-known names of Lachmann, the brothers Grimm, Müllenhoff, Zarncke, Bartsch, Raszmann, Simrock, Hermann Fischer, and Heinrich Fischer. In the sketch of the development of the *Arthur Saga* I have been under special obligations to the works of San Marte (Schulz), and for

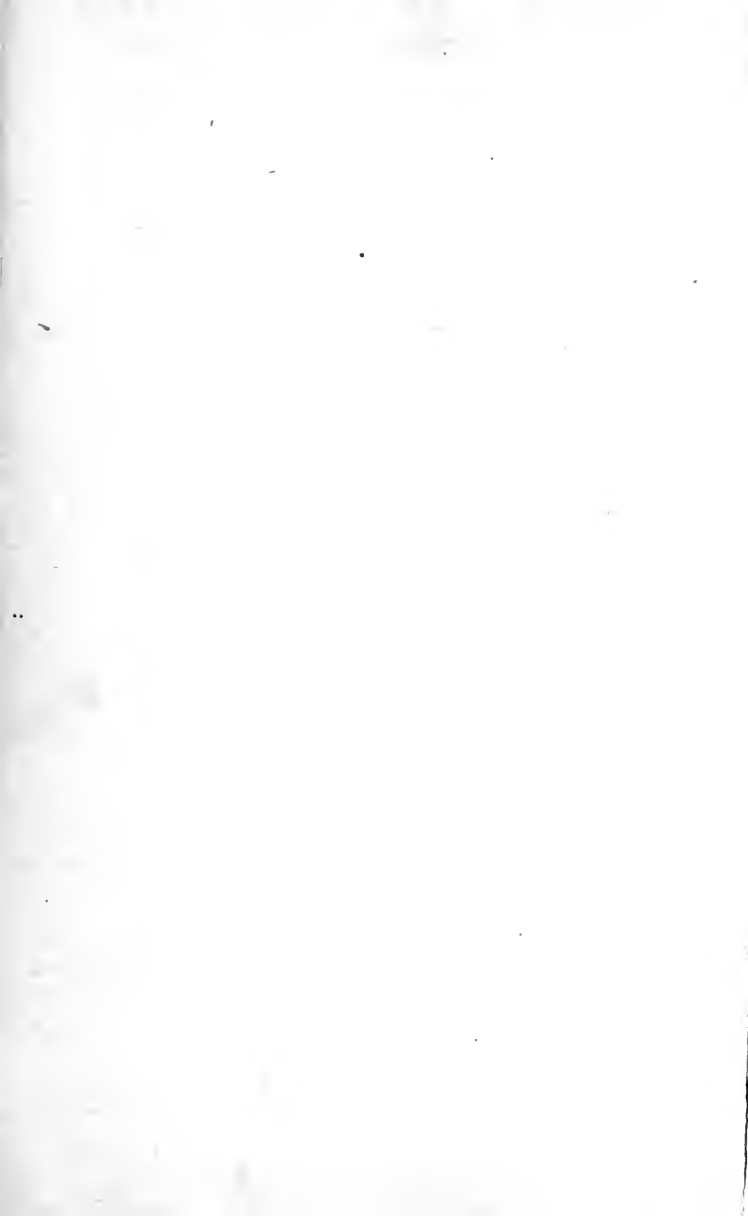


a few of the suggestions contained in Parzival, I have availed myself of Simrock's introduction to the poem.

The translations in this volume are, unless otherwise stated, my own. It is hoped that the attempt which has been made on the following pages to awaken and strengthen the interest in Mediæval German literature will not fail to attain its object.

G. T. D.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY, Sept. 1, 1882.



## ERRATA.

Page 50, in footnote, for Zür read Zur.

" 63, fourth line from bottom, for Guita-heath read Gnita-heath.

" 138, 14th line from top, for Sanct Gallen, read Saint Gall.

" 147, 19th " " " paragraph should be numbered IV.

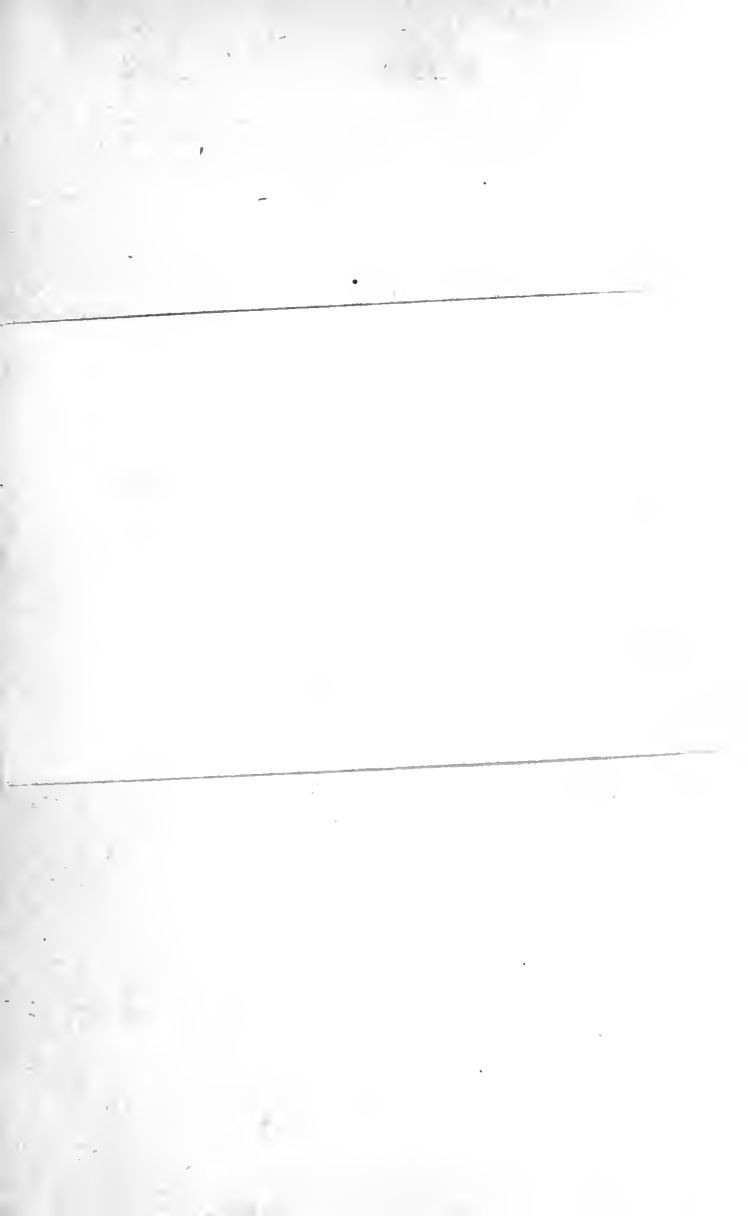
" 149, 9th " " " for IV. read V.

" 150, 19th " " " for V. read VI.

" 173, 15th " " " for Schelde read Scheldt.

" 226, footnote, for † p. 321, read † p. 253.

" 300, 11th line from top, for Nother read Notker.



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prehistoric darkness; they were a dim foreboding of the bright sunlight which afterwards broke forth in full splendor in the early epic literature of the Hindus, Persians, Greeks, and Teutons, when the ancient mythical elements had been interwoven with the history or saga-lore of world-renowned heroes.

Of a character very different from these poems, which are of popular growth, is another class of epic literature which is not based, as it were, on the spontaneous expression of a nation's life, — not the poetic document of popular feeling and tradition, — but is the creation of individual artistic genius. Thus, while the popular poet or the compiler of popular lays disappears behind his work, and is nothing but the guardian of the national treasure, the composer of the so-called art-poems takes individual shape in his productions, and often enriches his material with new inventions. The distinction between these two classes of epics is particularly marked in Mediæval German poetry, and is therefore commonly emphasized by German writers, especially by A. Vilmar in his "History of German Literature;" it has also been adopted by others, — for instance, by Bayard Taylor in his excellent "Studies in German Literature." Yet, in spite of the general difference of the two kinds of epic poems, it must be admitted that the distinction does not hold good in every particular, and cannot be carried out too rigidly. Both classes exerted some influence on each other, and the spirit which permeated Germany during the Middle Ages smoothed somewhat the contrast between them. Again, they

may be said to have a similar origin from the fact that the 'cultivation and preservation of the ancient traditions was chiefly due to the poets and singers in the retinue of the early German kings, especially during the fifth and sixth centuries, when the old heroic lays were sung at the royal banquets and on similar occasions, while the so-called art or court poetry (*Kunstpoeſie*; *Höfliche Poeſie*) of a later era, whose chief representatives are Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried von Strassburg, and Hartmann von Aue, was likewise particularly cherished at the royal courts and at the castles of the nobility. Many of the singers of the old popular lays were at the same time warriors of great renown, and the composers of the art poems belonged chiefly to the lower nobility; thus both were, generally speaking, of the same rank in the society of their times, and the art epics are in this sense merely a new form of the early heroic poetry. Yet the subject matter of the former was mostly taken from foreign sources, especially from French poems and legends, while the theme of the ancient lays consisted pre-eminently of national myths and sagas, from which originated afterwards, by the blending of different saga-cycles and by the addition of historical facts, the greatest popular poem of Mediaeval Germany, — the *Nibelungen Lied*.

Little is known of the very earliest epoch of German poetry, and this scanty information is derived mainly from the writings of Tacitus. He relates that the Germans celebrated in ancient lays their earth-born god, Tuisko, and his son Mannus, the

supposed ancestors and founders of their race. In their battle songs they invoked especially their god of war, to whom Tacitus gives the name of Hercules ; and the issue of the contest was surmised from the sounds of the war song, which was called *barditus* (from Old Norse *bardhi*, meaning a shield), as by holding the shield near the mouth the sounds reverberated with great force and the warriors were aroused to martial excitement. There were also some lays in honor of Arminius, the leader of the Cherusci, who freed Germany from the Roman yoke ; although they have perished, the memory of the great chieftain has been preserved by the Roman historian, whose race was the inveterate enemy of the Germans. According to Jornandes, who wrote about the middle of the sixth century, the Goths had very ancient songs in which the exploits of their early kings and heroes were related. At that almost prehistoric era of Germany there existed also at least the germs for the material of two sagas which afterwards, though greatly transformed, became renowned in songs and tales. These are the saga of Siegfried, the Nibelung, and the saga of the wolf and fox, Isengrim and Reinhart.

The condition of the German tribes was deeply affected by the migration of the races and by the introduction of Christianity. The influence of both these agencies, by which Germany was at the same time brought into close connection with the Roman world, will be considered hereafter, as far as it is necessary for our purpose. In this place it is sufficient to state that the clergy sought to destroy the old



native poetry, as it took more or less of its inspiration and material from the ancient belief of the people. The church was generally aided in these endeavors by the princes and nobles; yet in spite of their combined efforts it was not possible to eradicate at once and entirely the old religion. Many traces of it can be seen even at the present day in the customs and manners as well as in the superstitions and festal plays of the common people. It was only after Karl the Great caused the old heroic songs to be collected, that the clergy began to pay some attention to native poetry; moreover the churchmen of the tenth and eleventh centuries reproduced some of the ancient sagas in Latin, as we see from Waltharius and a few other poems of that time.

Since the sixth century there is abundant evidence of the existence and development of the great German hero-sagas. At that epoch there appeared in tradition the famous personages of the Gothic king Hermanric; of Dietrich von Bern, the historic Theodoric the Great; of Siegfried, the Nibelung; of the Burgundian Gunther; of Attila, the king of the Huns; and many other saga-renowned heroes with their champions. Yet, although we know from the historians and chroniclers of that time and from Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic poems, that the deeds of those heroes were celebrated in song, there is but very little in German literature that has been transmitted to us *from that era in the form in which it then existed*. Moreover, of the two poems which we possess from that period, the one is not complete, and the

other is composed in Latin. The first is the "Lay of Hildebrand" (Hildebrandslied); the second is called "Waltharius de Aquitania" (Walther von Aquitanien).

The Lay of Hildebrand was written down at the beginning of the ninth century, and its contents belong to the saga-cycle of Dietrich von Bern. According to tradition Dietrich had been driven from his home and realm by his enemies, whose leader appears here as Otacher, the historic Odoacer, whereupon he went with his valiant and faithful friend and weapon-master Hildebrand to Attila's court, to seek there help and protection. After the contest, which is depicted in the last part of the Nibelungen Lied, and the defeat of Odoacer, they returned home. There, at his departure thirty years ago, Hildebrand had left a youthful wife and a little son. The latter was named Hadubrand, and in the meantime had grown up to manhood. As soon as Hildebrand with his retinue entered his native country he was confronted by his son and his warriors. Before they engaged in combat, Hildebrand asked the name of his adversary; and when he learned that it was his son who opposed him, he sought to avoid the contest. He offered him his golden bracelets, which were a gift of Attila and an ornament the like of which was much coveted by the German warriors of that time. But Hadubrand refused them, and retorted, "Gifts shall be received with the spear, sword point against sword point; thou art an old cunning Hun, who meanest to deceive me in order to kill me the more surely with the spear." He also

added that seafarers had brought him the tidings of Hildebrand's death. Hildebrand exclaimed: "Woe is me! O ruling God! woful fate will be accomplished. Sixty summers and winters I have wandered about. . . . Now my own son will strike me dead with the sword, or I shall be his slayer. . . . But he would be the most cowardly of the Ostrogoths who would now refuse the combat, since thou hast so great a desire for strife." Then father and son hurled their spears, made from the wood of the ash-tree, against each other, and grimly fought with their swords so that the shields were hewn to pieces by their blows. Here the poem breaks off. The contest probably ended with the death of the son, as might be inferred from a comparison with similar sagas; for instance, with the Persian story of Rustum and Sohrab, told by Firdusi and rendered into beautiful English by Matthew Arnold.\* The story in the Gallic poem of Conlach and Cuchullin bears also a great resemblance to the German lay. The latter was preserved, in the fragmentary shape in which we possess it, by a very fortunate chance. At the beginning of the ninth century two monks of the famous convent of Fulda, who perhaps had been warriors before they withdrew from the world, as often happened at that time, wrote what they remembered of the great poem on the first and last blank leaves of their Prayer-book. It seems that they alternately dictated and wrote. Since the thirty years' war the manuscript has belonged to the library at Kassel. It is

\* Into German by Rückert.

composed in the Low German language, yet with many High German forms. Therefore some scholars suppose that it was originally written in the High German language, and transformed into the Low German by the copyist. The Lay of Hildebrand was sung by the people for many centuries, and about seven hundred years after the composition of the original work it was revived in a new form by Kaspar von der Roen. The latter's poem, although inferior to its model, is not devoid of a certain beauty in the description of the events. The title is "The Father and the Son" (*Der Vater mit dem Sohn*). In this version of the story Hildebrand defeats Hadubrand in the combat, and both return together to the wife and mother. Bayard Taylor characterized the importance of the ancient Lay of Hildebrand in a very appropriate manner when he says: "As we find the first written basis of the language in the Gothic Gospels of *Ulfilas*, so we find the first surviving relic of a native autochthonous German literature in the Song of Hildebrand." In the *Vilcina Saga* \* Hildebrand overcomes and wounds his son, whereupon the latter yields; but when he is about to give up his sword to his father, he treacherously aims a blow at his hand. Then Hildebrand exclaims, "Not thy father, but a woman, taught thee this blow."

"*Waltharius de Aquitania*," or "*Waltharius manu fortis*," is written in Latin hexameters, and based on a German poem of the tenth century which has been lost. The Latin epic was composed in the convent of Saint

Gall by the monk Ekehard I. (who died in 973), or by his contemporary Geraldus, or by both together, and was afterwards revised and remodelled by Ekehard IV., a monk of the same convent, who died about the year 1060. Although this work is written in the Latin language, the power inherent in the German epic poetry of that time and the grandeur of the old hero sagas are still visible under the foreign garb. The contents of the poem, which belongs to the sagacycles of Attila and Gunther, are briefly as follows. King Gibich ruled at Worms on the Rhine over the Franks, and had been forced to submit to the power of Attila. As Gibich's son Gunther was then very young, Hagen was sent as a hostage to Attila's court, together with a great treasure. Burgundy had also been compelled to yield to the might of the Huns, as well as Aquitania, the realm of the Visigoths. The king of Burgundy had to surrender his only daughter Hildegund to the victors, while a similar fate overtook the king of Aquitania, who was obliged to part with his son Walther. Both Hildegund and Walther were held as hostages at Attila's court in Pannonia (Hungary); but they, as well as Hagen, were kindly treated by the powerful chief. Hagen and Walther distinguished themselves by great valor, while Hildegund enjoyed the confidence of the queen, who intrusted the royal treasure to her care; yet all three longed for their homes and friends, and thought of flight. Hagen, after hearing that Gibich had died, and that Gunther refused to pay the tribute, escaped and safely arrived at Worms.

Later Walther fled with Hildegund and the treasure of the Franks. When they reached the Rhine near Worms, they gave to the ferryman, to set them across the river, the last fishes which they had, and which came from the Danube. The ferryman carried them to the royal cook, and when they were served at table, Gunther exclaimed that such fishes were not found in Frankland. Then Hagen said, "Walther has returned from the land of the Huns." Contrary to Hagen's advice, Gunther determined to pursue Walther and despoil him of his treasure. Walther, after crossing the Rhine, reached the Vosges (Wasichenwald), and there in a narrow defile of the mountains the contest took place. Hagen, despite Gunther's scornful remarks, took at first no part in the attacks on his friend, but from a neighboring hill looked down upon the combats of the warriors. Walther defeated and slew Gunther's champions one after the other, and each encounter is depicted with great vivacity. The poet gives a fine delineation of the character of the combatants. Each warrior uses different arms, and each victory differs from the others. Vilmar does not speak in too laudatory terms when he says that some of the scenes of battle are not surpassed by any descriptions that can be found in the Homeric poems. At last Gunther went to Hagen to induce him to take part in the combat. Hagen thought of his sincere friendship for Walther, and hesitated for some time, although his nephew had been slain by Walther. Yet, since all their friends had fallen, he advised Gunther to depart from the

place, so that Walther might think they had returned to Worms. Then, after he had left his strongly fortified position in the defile, they could pursue him and attack him from the rear. They did so, and in this last combat, in which two fought against one, Gunther lost a foot, Walther his right arm, and Hagen an eye and some of his teeth. The fight being ended, the heroes were reconciled, and Hildegund with trembling hands bound up their wounds. Walther returned home and celebrated his wedding feast with Hildegund. After his father's death he reigned thirty years in peace and glory.

As we have shown that there are a few instances in which the clergy tried at times to revive the old national lays, we may now devote a very brief space to the consideration of another class of epics, — to ecclesiastical poetry in the proper sense of the word, the material of which is taken from the teachings of Christianity and especially from the Holy Scriptures. The most important works here are the old Saxon alliterative epic "*Heliand*," and Otfried's Old High German "*Harmony of the Gospels*," also called "*Krist*," which is the first work composed in rhymes. The *Heliand* (*Heiland*, Saviour) was written by a Saxon singer who is reported to have been a peasant, that is, an uneducated layman. The work was undertaken at the request of Louis le Débonnaire (Ludwig der Fromme), and was accomplished between the years 825 and 835. According to tradition a supernatural voice had aroused the poet to compose sacred songs, and it is very probable that the story of the Anglo-

Saxon Cædmon was here transferred to the author of the Heliand. The poem is a very remarkable work, and shows a beautiful blending of the ideas of Christianity with the spirit of ancient Germany. It is a truly Christian epic in which the characters and situations are Saxon. Vilmar says correctly: "When the Lord begins the Sermon on the Mount, the whole scene is depicted in those grand forms in which the council of the German kings, princes, and dukes took place before the eyes of the army and the people." The poem is throughout truly German, as it is truly Christian; the language is vigorous, simple, and beautiful. It seems that the author availed himself especially of the "Harmony of the Gospels" by the Alexandrian Ammonius, whose work was based chiefly on St. Matthew. An epic very different from the Heliand, and composed about thirty years later, is Otfried's "Krist." Otfried was probably a Frank and a pupil of Hrabanus Maurus, yet he wrote his poem in the Benedictine convent of Weissenburg in Alsace. He was a scholar, and his work contains many mystical and moral interpretations which were fully in accordance with the spirit of the clergy of his time. We may here again quote Vilmar, as he admirably expresses the character of Otfried's production: "While there [in the Heliand] we hear the whole Saxon nation with one mighty voice sing the glory of Christ, the Shepherd of the people, we have here but the voice of an individual monk, who appears in almost every portion of his work with his *I*; he relates rather than sings, and



although his narration is often very good, very appropriate and feeling, and at times he relates with a sublime voice and a lofty soul, yet he merely relates, describes, and depicts the scenes, and often becomes tame, feeble, and diffuse in telling what there [in the *Heliand*] was expressed in brief, powerful, and striking words. The poem as a storehouse of the German language is invaluable, and its value is, if possible, increased by the extraordinary care and accuracy devoted to the metrical part."

We may here briefly notice another poem, generally known under the name of the "*Ludwigslied*." Its author was a clergyman, and he describes the victory of the West Frankish King Ludwig III. over the Normans at the battle of Saucourt in the year 881. The work is of some importance, and is the first secular poem in German, written by an ecclesiastic, probably by Hucbald, a learned monk, who died in 930. Although the *Ludwigslied* is not devoid of a certain beauty in style and expression, yet upon the whole it cannot be compared with the old epic, as seen in the *Lay of Hildebrand*; it has none of the force and majesty of the latter. It is properly a *Leich*, or song written for music, wherein, as Bayard Taylor very appropriately said, the melody partly determines beforehand what words shall be used.

In this place we may make a few general remarks on early German versification. The main principle in German poetry, from the most ancient times down to the present day, is that its metrical composition is based chiefly on the accent of the words, and not

on their quantity, as in Latin and Greek. In Old German a verse consists of a certain number of accented syllables, while unaccented syllables *may* stand between the accented ones. As the latter were thus of chief importance, the verses are generally designated by them alone without regard to the rest. In this sense it is true that the German verse was originally composed of eight accented syllables, and was divided into two equal hemistichs, which were separated by a strong cæsura, and connected by alliteration during the earliest epoch and by the rhyme since the latter half of the ninth century. As has been said above, the first work that was composed in rhymes was Otfried's "Harmony of the Gospels." In the alliterative poetry the above-mentioned rhythm has not always been strictly observed, and the verses are often too long or too short. In the early rhymed poems the rhyme as a rule is not perfect; that is, when the vowels correspond, the consonants are different, and when the latter are alike, the vowels do not correspond. These impure or imperfect rhymes are commonly called "assonance."

From the tenth century to the middle of the twelfth the poetic genius of the German people seemed to be dormant. Folk songs were composed by different authors who were not without talent, but nothing of importance was done to develop national poetry. There was a literature, but it was mainly written in Latin. Yet the old heroic lays of Siegfried and Kriemhild, Hagen and Dietrich, were not entirely forgotten; these ancient songs lived among the

great mass of the people, and were preserved by them despite the indifference or hostility of the courts and the priesthood. A new era began to arise when the great house of the Hohenstaufen ascended the throne of Germany and the Crusades aroused in all Western Europe a mighty flame of enthusiasm. Then commenced the glorious period of Mediæval German poetry, a part of which — the great epics — will form the subject of the following pages.



## THE

# GREAT EPICS OF MEDIÆVAL GERMANY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### OUTLINE OF THE NIBELUNGEN LIED. — PART I.

THE Nibelungen Lied has been so called from the last line of the poem, "Daz ist der Nibelunge Liet," or rather from the common modern German version of it, "Das ist das Nibelungen Lied." In its present shape it was composed toward the end of the twelfth century. It is based on the combination and blending of four different sources: 1. The Frankish saga-cycle, or the saga-cycle of the Lower Rhine, whose hero is Siegfried, of Santen on the Lower Rhine. ✓  
2. The saga-cycle of Burgundy, whose heroes are Gunther, king at Worms, and his brothers, Gernot and Giselher. Their mother is called Ute (meaning ancestress); their sister is Kriemhild; Gunther's wife is Brunhild; his chief vassals are Hagen and Volker. ✓  
3. The Ostrogothic saga-cycle, whose hero is Dietrich von Bern; his principal vassal and weapon-master is old Hildebrand. 3  
4. The saga-cycle of Etzel, or Attila, ✓

king of the Huns, with his allies and vassals ; among the latter, Rüdiger von Bechlaren is the most distinguished. Our epic, in the form in which it has been transmitted to us, is divided into two parts, each of them containing nineteen songs, called *aventiure* (adventures). The first part may be named Kriemhild's Love ; the second, Her Revenge.

## PART I.

I. — V. — The first stanza of the first song bears witness to the fact that our poem is based on the contents of ancient sagas.

In olden song and story high marvels we are told  
Of heroes of great glory, in toils and labors bold ;  
Of festal glee and joyance, of woe and weeping drear,  
Of dauntless heroes' striving, may ye now wonders hear.

The second stanza introduces at once the heroine of the great epic, and at the same time foreshadows the great affliction that befell many valiant heroes on her account.

In Burgundy was cherished a noble maiden fair ;  
With her in all the kingdoms naught fairer could compare.  
The maid, whose name was Kriemhild, became a beauteous wife,  
For whom full many warriors were doomed to lose their life.

Our poem takes us now to the famous city of Worms on the Rhine, where Kriemhild grew up at the royal court under the protection of her mother, Queen Ute, and of her three brothers, Gunther, Gernot, and young Giselher. Gunther, being the eldest, had ascended the throne after the death of his father,

Dankrat. Of all the renowned vassals, the pillars of the Burgundian realm, grim Hagen of Tronje, kinsman to the royal brothers, was the most distinguished; beside him his friend Volker of Alzey, the "Fiddler good," as he was surnamed, and Dankwart, Hagen's brother, must be mentioned.

*Hagen*  
*Volker*  
*Dankwart*

The twelfth stanza of the first song may be called the real opening of the poem, as what precedes is merely an introduction.

Surrounded by great honors, there dreamed Queen Ute's child  
How she brought up a falcon, strong, beautiful, and wild.  
Him quickly clutched two eagles, — she had to see his fate, —  
And here on earth she never could feel a woe so great.

At morn she told her mother, Dame Ute, of the dream;  
The queen explained its meaning, as it to her did seem:  
"The falcon thou caressest, a noble man is he;  
May God shield him from danger, or soon his end will be."

"Why speak to me of husband, belovèd mother mine?  
The love of wooing heroes I ever will decline;  
I will remain so beauteous until my death draws near,  
Lest love of man should ever bring on me sorrow drear."

"Forswear it not so wholly," her mother then replied.  
"If e'er thy heart shall fully by joy be gratified,  
It will come from man's wooing; thou 'lt be a peerless wife,  
If God will ever grant thee to charm a hero's life."

"Speak so to me no longer," said Kriemhild to the queen.  
"With many beauteous women it often has been seen  
How love draws always sorrow behind it in its train.  
I'll shun them both with prudence to shield my heart from pain."

Thus, as on a fair summer day in a verdant plain  
a dim vapor appears to be rising at the far distant

horizon, and, gradually approaching, becomes a threatening thunder-cloud, carrying destruction to the smiling landscape, so arose in the heart of the fair and innocent maiden a dim foreboding of the coming storm. As Vilmar says, "The shadows of this dream move henceforth athwart the serene heaven of her life and love; darker and ever darker they hover over the spring days of her first and only love, darker and ever darker over the gay sports and magnificent feasts at the time of her marriage; with a pale glimmer the sun shines through the gloomy semi-darkness, until glowing red he approaches his decline, and at last with bloody, glaring splendor sinks into eternal night."

*Sir Junc*  
The second song of our poem takes us to the stronghold of Santen, on the Lower Rhine in Netherland, where Siegfried, the son of King Siegmund, had grown up to manhood. At a great festival held in honor of young Siegfried, and after the celebration of a solemn mass in the minster, the young prince and four hundred young noblemen were dubbed knights, whereupon a great tournament followed. Siegfried, having heard of Kriemhild's peerless beauty, determined to woo her, and made ready for his journey to Worms, although his father, Siegmund, and his mother, Siegelind, had endeavored to dissuade him from such a dangerous enterprise. Yet he chose twelve trusty knights to accompany him, and after a journey of six days they arrived, in glittering armor and on richly caparisoned steeds, at the royal castle at Worms.



As neither Gunther nor any of his vassals about him knew the warriors, Hagen was summoned.

To him were known the kingdoms of every foreign land,  
And he shall now inform us if he does know this band.

Hagen gazed from the window on the strangers, and declared that he did not know them.

Sir Hagen then continued: "As well as I may ween,  
Although the valiant Siegfried I never yet have seen,  
I shall believe most truly, however it may be,  
That yonder lordly hero none other is than he."

Hagen began to relate some events of Siegfried's life, which show that the primitive account of the acquisition of the Nibelung hoard\* was still dimly remembered in our poem. He said that Siegfried had once happened to enter all alone the land of the Nibelungs after the old King Nibelung had died. As he rode by a mountain, he met the sons of the king, Schilbung and Nibelung, surrounded by many valiant heroes. The hoard of the Nibelungs had been brought forth from the bowels of the mountain; and as soon as the princes espied Siegfried, they urged him to make a division of the immense treasure of gold and precious stones. Siegfried at last reluctantly complied with their request, and they offered him as reward the mighty sword, Balmung, that had belonged to old King Nibelung. Yet, as Siegfried could not succeed in satisfying the princes, twelve giants, who were in their service, rushed upon him, whereupon he slew them and the royal youths with the sword

\* Cf. p. 60.

Balmung, and overcame seven hundred knights, their vassals. Then the powerful dwarf, Alberich, in order to revenge the death of his masters, turned furiously upon him; but Siegfried overpowered him and thus became the possessor of the hoard, among which were Alberich's famous *Tarnkappe*, or magic cap of darkness, rendering its wearer invisible, and the celebrated wishing-rod.\* The treasure was brought back to its former place, and Alberich was made keeper of it, after he had sworn allegiance to Siegfried.

Furthermore Hagen related how Siegfried had slain a monstrous dragon,† and had bathed in his blood so that no weapon could do him any harm.

At Hagen's advice, Siegfried was cordially received by Gunther and his knights. But as he presumptuously challenged the king to a combat, and declared that the victor should possess the land and people of the vanquished, there arose a great uproar among Gunther's vassals. Yet the king and Gernot assuaged their wrath, and Giseller told Siegfried that as long as he chose to ask for anything in a becoming manner, all that they had should be his. Siegfried became of a gentler mood, and was royally entertained at a great banquet. Festal games and tournaments were held in his honor, and he distinguished himself above all others in every kind of chivalry, whether in hurling stones or casting the spear. Thus he passed an entire year at Worms without having seen Kriemhild,

\* The latter is mentioned only in the nineteenth adventure.

† Cf. p. 19.

who, gazing stealthily at him from the castle window, had often admired his great beauty and unconquerable strength.

The fourth adventure contains the episode of the Saxon war, in which Siegfried with his own twelve companions and one thousand chosen Burgundians defeated the Saxons and their allies, the Danes. A great festival was held at Worms to celebrate the victory, and it was then that Siegfried for the first time saw Kriemhild, as she appeared at her mother's side, accompanied by an hundred knights, sword in hand, and by many noble ladies of the court, richly attired. Our poet describes her entry into the festal hall in the following words : —

There came the lovely maiden as comes the morning red,  
Through troubled clouds appearing. Full many a sorrow fled  
From him who long had loved her, his soul's and heart's desire :  
He saw the lovely maiden in beauty's full attire.

Upon her garment sparkled of gems full many a row ;  
The light of love shone from her with rosy-colored glow :  
Whatever one might wish for, he yet was forced to own  
That here on earth naught fairer could evermore be shown.

Even as the radiant full moon outshines the starry light,  
When from the clouds she rises in splendor clear and bright,  
So she excelled in beauty full many a maid and dame :  
This well might raise the courage of heroes of great fame.

Siegfried's heart was filled with joy as he drew near the princess, who blushed deeply, and said with graceful loveliness, —

“Be welcome here, Sir Siegfried, most good and noble knight.”  
His soul swelled from her greeting with courage and delight.

With many loving glances they spied each other there,  
The hero and the maiden, with stealthy, blushing air.

Kriemhild went to the minster, and after the mass had been held, she thanked Siegfried for his valorous aid in the Saxon war. From this time forth their mutual love grew daily, and the other knights often envied Siegfried's happiness.

VI.—IX.—The sixth adventure relates how Gunther went to Isenland to woo Brunhild.

There was a royal maiden who ruled far o'er the sea;  
With her none could be likened in fame and high degree.  
Fair was she beyond measure; all puissant was her might:  
She cast the spear with prowess with many a wooing knight;  
She hurled the stone a distance, and after it would she bound.  
Each knight who thought of wooing the warrior-maid renowned,  
In three games had to vanquish the noble queen so dread;  
Whoe'er in one was conquered, was doomed to lose his head.

One day Gunther, while sitting in the council hall, was urged by his friends to select a consort worthy of himself and of the glory of the country.

Then spoke the Lord of Rhineland: "I'll sail across the sea  
To woo the mighty Brunhild, whate'er the end may be.  
To gain her love and favor, I'll boldly risk my life;  
I'll be content to lose it, or win her as my wife."

As Siegfried heard of this, he endeavored to dissuade Gunther from such a dangerous plan by telling him of the martial prowess and unconquerable strength of Brunhild. Yet the king was determined that none other than Brunhild should be queen at

Worms ; and Hagen, seeing that Siegfried was well informed about the warlike maiden, suggested that the hero from Netherland should accompany Gunther to Isenland.

“Wilt aid me, noble Siegfried,” the king said to his guest,  
 “To woo the charming maiden and do what I request,  
 And if the lovely lady shall then become my wife,  
 I’ll venture, to reward thee, mine honor and my life.”

To him Sir Siegfried answered : “Whatever may betide,  
 If you give me your sister to be my lovely bride,  
 The fair and charming Kriemhild, I’ll aid you as I may,  
 And for my toil and labor I’ll claim no other pay.”

“That vouch I,” said King Gunther, “and pledge thereto my hand.

Whenever beauteous Brunhild comes hither to this land,  
 I shall bestow my sister on you to be your wife,  
 That you may with the fair one enjoy a happy life.”

This they pledged to one another by a solemn oath, not surmising what endless misery would follow from this enterprise. Yet when the time came for leave-taking, Kriemhild told her brother that it would be far better for him to stay at Worms and marry one of the fair women of the land, than risk his life in such an adventure.

I ween her heart foretold her the coming dire dismay.  
 All eyes were full of weeping, whatever one might say.

She commended her brother to Siegfried’s protection, and Gunther and Siegfried departed, accompanied only by Hagen and his brother Dankwart. They sailed down the Rhine in a bark, and on the twelfth morning came within sight of Isenstein, the

great fortress in Brunhild's land. Gunther was astounded at the warlike and noble aspect of the far-stretching coast. Before they landed, Siegfried said to Gunther, "Let me advise you to tell the queen that you are my liege lord and I am your vassal, and then all will be well." Afterwards they rode up to the fortress, which contained eighty-six gloomily frowning turrets, three wide-stretching palaces, and a spacious hall, composed of marble blocks as green as grass. When the queen, gorgeously attired, surrounded by an hundred maidens, and followed by five hundred knights, sword in hand, saw the approaching heroes, she at once recognized Siegfried, and saluted him first, and in presence of the king. Siegfried declined the honor the queen had bestowed on him, and said, "My liege lord, King Gunther, has come to woo you." Brunhild, astonished and angry, replied, "If he be your master and you his liegeman, and he will try his strength in the games which I shall impose on him, I will become his wife if he shall conquer. But if I win in one of them, the lives of you all shall be lost."

Brunhild ordered the games to take place without any further delay. While she put on her coat of mail, seven hundred armed men formed a circle about the space measured out for the combat.

And then appeared her liegemen, who carried to the field,  
Adorned with gold and jewels, a brightly glittering shield;

It was beset most richly with gold as well as steel.  
Four chamberlains who bore it beneath its weight did reel.

Unto the dame was carried a mighty spear for fight,—  
It was her wont to hurl it afar with all her might,—

A spear both sharp and cumbrous, weighty and strongly made,  
On either side provided with keen, terrific blade.

And three of Brunhild's liegemen could hardly bear its weight;  
Therefore the noble Gunther was filled with sorrow great.

That Brunhild's strength was fearful, was then most fully  
known.

They brought within the circle a heavy marble stone,  
Unwieldy and unshapely, and huge and broad and strong:  
Twelve valiant heroes hardly could bear its mass along.

In the meantime Siegfried had secretly put on his  
*Tarnkappe*, or cap of darkness,\* and said to Gunther,  
"Give me the shield. I shall wield it in the combat.  
Make the gestures and I will do the work."

The queen had bared her arms, and, with the shield  
in her hand, poised the spear high in the air and  
hurled it with great vehemence. It struck Gunther's  
shield with such force that sparks flew from its steel  
rings, and both he and Siegfried staggered from the  
blow, although of course the latter's movements were  
invisible to all. Siegfried wrenched Brunhild's spear  
from Gunther's shield, which it had penetrated, and  
cast the shaft with such superior strength at Brunhild's  
coat of mail that the queen was wellnigh vanquished.  
Yet quickly she arose, swung the huge stone, and  
hurled it the length of twelve fathoms, bounding  
after it with clashing armor. Gunther placed his  
hands upon the stone and seemed to throw it, while  
it was really Siegfried who cast it farther than Brun-  
hild had done, and, taking Gunther with him, leaped  
far beyond the place where the stone had fallen.

\* See p. 102.

Thereupon Brunhild, believing to have been vanquished by Gunther, announced to her people that henceforth they would be the king's liegemen. Siegfried went back to the beach where the bark was moored, put away his *Tarnkappe*, and then returned to the castle, where he pretended to believe that the games had not yet taken place.

As Brunhild was unwilling to follow Gunther at once to Worms, and an alarming number of her vassals appeared armed at Isenstein, Siegfried promised to depart speedily and to return with one thousand chosen knights.

Siegfried went down to the beach, and, putting on his *Tarnkappe*, sailed in the bark to the Nibelung land. He came to a fortress on a mountain and knocked at the gate, which was heavily bolted. A giant, who guarded it from within, cried out, "Who knocks so violently at the gate?" Siegfried disguised his voice and demanded admission in threatening words, whereupon the giant flung open the gate and wrathfully attacked him. Siegfried was pleased with the fierce resistance of the trusty keeper, and after a furious struggle overcame and bound him. Thereupon Alberich, the dwarf, appeared, well armed, and with a seven-thonged whip in his hand, each thong of the whip having a heavy golden knob. He rushed upon Siegfried with great fury, but the latter seized him by his gray beard and Alberich was forced to beg for mercy. Shortly afterward Siegfried revealed his name, and Alberich, rejoiced at this announcement, declared himself ready to obey his command.



At once a thousand warriors, the bravest of the Nibelung host, were prepared to follow Siegfried to Brunhild's realm. When they arrived there, the queen no longer hesitated to depart to Worms.

X. — XIII. — Brunhild was cordially received at Worms by Queen Ute and Kriemhild. At the wedding-feast Siegfried reminded Gunther of his promise.

There spoke the royal Gunther: "Grant me a favor now,  
My most beloved sister; aid me to keep my vow.  
I've pledged thee to a hero; if thou 'lt espouse the knight,  
Thou truly wilt accomplish my wishes and delight."

There said the noble maiden: "O dearest brother mine,  
Thou needest not implore me. To every wish of thine,  
Whatever thou commandest, I always will agree;  
The knight whom thou hast chosen, my husband shall he be."

Siegfried offered his hand to Kriemhild, and in the midst of the noble assembly imprinted ardent kisses on his bride. The double marriage of Gunther and Brunhild and Siegfried and Kriemhild was celebrated with great pomp, yet in spite of the festivities a threatening thunder-cloud seemed to darken the royal hall.

The king sat at the banquet beside Brunhild his queen.  
When she beheld fair Kriemhild, she felt a pang most keen,  
As Kriemhild sat near Siegfried; the queen began to weep,  
And many a burning tear-drop o'er her fair cheek did creep.

There spoke the country's ruler: "My wife, what means this sight?

What is it? Why are clouded your eyes of dazzling bright?  
Far better were rejoicing; for under thy command  
Are many valiant heroes, my castles and my land."

Brunhild replied, "I am sorely grieved at seeing your sister take her seat at the side of your liegeman." The king tried to avoid any explanation, and simply said, "Siegfried is himself a king's son, and has as many castles and lands as I." Brunhild was not satisfied, and continued sad and sullen throughout the evening.

It is true that Siegfried played the part of Gunther's vassal at their arrival in Isenstein, yet Brunhild had other causes to be vexed at the betrothal of Siegfried and Kriemhild than those she mentioned, — causes which are hardly alluded to in our poem, but appear from the Northern version of our saga.

When the wedding-feast was ended and Gunther and Brunhild had withdrawn to the bridal chamber, the queen again asked questions in regard to Siegfried. As the king did not reply, she seized him and bound his hands and feet with her magic girdle and hung him to a huge nail on the wall.

On the following day Gunther informed Siegfried of the treatment which he had suffered from the hands of the queen, whereupon Siegfried promised to aid the king. That night Siegfried, concealed from view in his *Tarnkappe*, went to Brunhild's chamber with Gunther, and after a fierce struggle wrested both girdle and ring from the dread queen, thus conquering her, while she supposed it was Gunther who had vanquished her. Henceforth Brunhild had no greater strength than any other woman.

While Siegfried was engaged in the combat with Brunhild, his absence was noticed by his wife, and

after he returned, she questioned him about the cause. Siegfried at first evaded an explanation, but in the end yielded to the eager supplications of his beloved Kriemhild, and also gave her Brunhild's ring and girdle, — a fatal hour, destined to be the cause of endless sorrow, not only to her and Siegfried, but to the whole royal house and to many noble heroes.

The eleventh adventure relates how Siegfried journeyed home with his wife and was crowned king after his father's abdication. The Nibelung hoard had been given by Siegfried to Kriemhild as a bridal portion. ~~The young king and queen passed many years in great happiness together.~~

In the meantime Brunhild had not forgotten Siegfried, and pretended to wonder why Kriemhild had been bestowed on him, as he was a vassal, and why, being such, he did not render homage to King Gunther. The latter dared not tell her the truth, but, as she feigned to have a great desire to see Kriemhild, he complied with her wish to invite Siegfried and his wife to a great festival at Worms.

The king sent messengers to Siegfried and Kriemhild, whom they found in Norway at the Nibelung fortress. The royal couple departed with one thousand Nibelung knights, who were afterwards joined by old King Siegmund and an hundred knights of Netherland, and arrived at Worms, where they were cordially received by Gunther and his queen.

In honor of the noble guests, great festivities took place in the royal city, tournaments were held, and the castle walls resounded with the peal of trumpets.

All was peace and joy until the evening of the eleventh day. Then Brunhild could bear no longer that Siegfried, supposed to be Gunther's vassal, had never paid tribute, and she was determined to know why. The spirit of evil took possession of her, and the voice of envious hate was heard among the festal sounds of joy.

XIV.—XIX. — One evening, as a tournament took place in the castle yard, the two queens gazed from the palace windows on the noble chivalry below, among whom were Gunther and Siegfried.

Together there were seated the queens so rich and fair;  
They spoke of two great heroes who were beyond compare.  
There said the beauteous Kriemhild, "My spouse is such a knight

That all these lands and kingdoms ought to obey his might."

To her Queen Brunhild answered: "How could that ever be?  
If no one else were living but thou alone and he,  
Then all these lands and kingdoms might be his own, I ween;  
As long as lives King Gunther, that never shall be seen."

Kriemhild did not perceive that Brunhild's wrath began to be aroused, and did not heed the words of her sister-in-law.

To her replied fair Kriemhild, "Behold, how he stands there,  
How lordly he surpasses all heroes everywhere."

Then Brunhild spoke: "Thy consort, however brave indeed,  
How beautiful and valiant, — him always must precede  
The dauntless hero Gunther, the noble brother thine;  
Before all kings most truly his lustrous crown must shine."

The quarrel waxed hotter, and Brunhild called Siegfried her husband's vassal.

There spoke again fair Kriemhild: "Thou shalt well understand,

As thou hast called my Siegfried a liegeman of this land,

This day by all their vassals it shall be plainly seen

That I'll go to the minster preceding Gunther's queen."

Brunhild retorted angry words, and then the queens parted. At the door of the minster the people were greatly astonished when they saw the two royal trains arriving separately, instead of coming together as they had done before. Brunhild's fury reached a still higher pitch, as the attire of Kriemhild's maidens and knights outshone in splendor the appearance of her own retinue, however gorgeously arrayed.

There came the queens together before the minster gate.

The wife of royal Gunther, from fierce and envious hate,

Bade fair and noble Kriemhild "stand still," in words of strife:

"Before the queen shall never proceed the vassal's wife."

In the quarrel ensuing upon this, Kriemhild, who in the heat of her passion wrongly interpreted the events of the bridal night, asserted that Brunhild had been Siegfried's paramour, and proudly entered the minster. Brunhild remained without the minster doors during the service, and, as Kriemhild came out, she demanded proofs of the accusation, whereupon Kriemhild showed her the ring and the girdle. Gunther was sent for, and, after he had heard what had happened, summoned Siegfried. The latter solemnly and truly declared that he never told Kriemhild what she had said of his relation to Brunhild. Both Gunther and Siegfried then endeavored to compose the

strife, yet Brunhild was filled with sadness, and Hagen, after hearing of the insult which the queen had suffered, made a vow that Siegfried should have to atone for Brunhild's sorrow. Thus the sullen thunderclouds that had seemed to overshadow the festal hall during the royal weddings appeared to grow more and more threatening, and to forebode the final overthrow of a great and noble house.

Giselher nobly took the cause of Siegfried against Hagen, and Gunther was greatly troubled by his powerful vassal's design, as he thought of Siegfried's former devotion to him. He tried for some time to change the opinion of those who advised Siegfried's death, yet his weak nature made him listen to the words of grim Hagen, whose wily tongue depicted to Gunther the danger which he might incur while so great a king as Siegfried lived, who outshone the power and glory of the Burgundian monarch. Since the hero could not be slain in open and fair combat, Hagen had to take refuge in a vile stratagem, and nothing was left for the traitor but to murder him. If Hagen's chief motive for advising, planning, and accomplishing the dark deed had sprung only from the fidelity which a liegeman owed to his sovereign lord, or from the unselfish desire to avenge the wrong done to the latter's wife, he could not have appeared blamable in the light of the feudal code of honor, at least not so far as his aim was concerned, although the means to reach it was contrary to the higher ideas of chivalry in its better days. While it cannot be denied that Hagen was distinguished by great

fidelity to the king's family, yet the incentives to Siegfried's murder were, besides his devotion to the royal house, his envy and jealous hate of a hero whose inferior he felt himself to be in every respect. In the second part of our poem Hagen appears in a yet more terrible, but also much nobler light.

Kriemhild, struck with fatal blindness, believed Hagen to be a sincere friend of Siegfried, and she confided to the traitor a secret, referring to Siegfried's former slaying of a dragon by the side of a mountain.

“When from the wounded dragon the boiling blood streamed  
down,

Within the gore bathed Siegfried, the knight of great renown.  
There fell between his shoulders a broad-shaped linden leaf,  
And there he can be wounded : this gives me heartfelt grief.”

Hagen, overjoyed at this information, advised Kriemhild to sew upon his garment some mark by which he might know the spot, so that he could, as he said, better shield Siegfried in case of danger. The unfortunate woman promised to embroider a little silken cross over the place where the leaf had fallen.

Gunther ordered a great hunting to take place in the Odenwald, and Siegfried declared himself ready to accompany the king. Kriemhild had been oppressed with evil forebodings, and deeply regretted that she had revealed Siegfried's secret to Hagen, yet she durst not tell her husband of it. As Siegfried came to take leave of her before going to the hunt, she tried to retain him.

She said unto the hero, "Give up the chase to-day.  
I dreamed last night of sorrow, how o'er the heath away  
Two fierce wild boars pursued thee; — all flowers were turned  
to red;

And therefore I, poor woman, do grieve with tears and dread."

Siegfried endeavored to calm her, but she continued, —

"Oh no! beloved Siegfried! I fear thine overthrow.  
I dreamed last night of sorrow, how in a dale below  
There fell o'er thee two mountains, that I saw thee no more.  
Oh, do not leave me, Siegfried! My heart is deeply sore."

Siegfried tenderly embraced his beloved wife, tried to calm her, and at last bade her farewell. The chase began amidst a joyous tumult and the sounds of the bugle, so that hills and dales gave back the loud echoes. After a successful hunt and a merry chase of a bear, Siegfried sat down with Gunther, Hagen, and the other hunters to enjoy the meal that had been prepared for them. As he called for wine, Hagen told him that the hampers of wine had been sent by mistake to the Spessart forest, but that he knew of a spring of cool and clear water. As soon as Siegfried wished to be directed to the spring, Hagen, in an apparently careless manner, said to Siegfried, "I have been told that no one can surpass Kriemhild's lord in running." Siegfried replied to Hagen, "Let us run a race to the spring, King Gunther, you, and myself." Gunther and Hagen divested themselves of their armor and heavy garments, and ran like two fierce panthers, while Siegfried, laden with his weapons, arrived first at the spring. Gunther stooped and



drank, and when he had arisen, Siegfried did likewise. Then Hagen stealthily put away Siegfried's sword and bow beyond his reach, took the hero's spear that leaned against the linden-tree and thrust it through the cross which Kriemhild had embroidered on her husband's garment. Siegfried took his shield, and, with the deadly spear between his shoulders, overtook the traitor, who had fled in craven flight, and smote him with his shield until it was broken into pieces. But by this time the dying hero's strength began to fail and the color fled his cheeks.

There fell among the flowers fair Kriemhild's spouse, undone,  
And from the wounded hero in streams the blood did run.

All bewailed the death of Siegfried; but Hagen alone was implacable, without mercy and without regret.

There spoke to them grim Hagen: "What is it you deplore?  
Our fears and all our sorrows are stilled forevermore;  
But few will now be able to stand against our might.  
That I have dealt this death-blow, I glory and delight."

"You have no cause for boasting," Sir Siegfried did exclaim;  
"If I had e'er suspected your vile and murderous aim,  
I should have well protected 'gainst such as you my life;  
But naught grieves me so greatly as Dame Kriemhild, my  
wife."

He writhed in bitter anguish; with pang and gasping breath,  
His bleeding heart lamented: "My bloody, murderous death  
You will have cause to grieve for in time to come, I trow.  
You may believe me truly: you've struck your own death-  
blow."

All round about the flowers were wet with Siegfried's gore,  
And after a short struggle the hero was no more.

When night had come, the royal hunting-party crossed the Rhine and entered Worms. Hagen, to complete his villany, caused Siegfried's corpse to be laid before Kriemhild's door, so that she could not fail to find it when she went to mass early on the following morning.

And there she dropped and fainted, — no word came forth, no sound;

The fair and joyless woman lay there stretched on the ground.

When her swoon had passed, her maidens strove to console her by saying that the dead man might perhaps be some stranger knight.

She answered, "No, 't is Siegfried, my husband dear, I know; And Brunhild has designed it and Hagen dealt the blow."

Eleven hundred knights, one thousand Nibelungs and one hundred from Netherland, were ready to wreak dire vengeance on the murderer; but Kriemhild commanded them to desist from such a hazardous endeavor, as the Burgundians could muster at least thirty warriors to their one. As Hagen on the following morning drew near the corpse, the blood began to ooze from the wounds, and it became evident to all who the murderer was.

After the body had been buried, Kriemhild took up her dwelling near the minster and went every day to Siegfried's grave, but no one could console her heart. During three years and a half she did not speak a word to her brother Gunther, nor cast her eyes on blood-stained Hagen. Through Gernot and Giselher a reconciliation with Gunther was at last brought

about, and soon after the Nibelung hoard, Kriemhild's marriage-gift, was, with her consent, carried from Nibelung land to Worms. Kriemhild, who cared more for the loss of Siegfried than for all the gold in the world, scattered precious gifts among rich and poor. When Hagen saw what great power she could wield by her generosity, and how many knights were willing to become her vassals, he was greatly alarmed and stealthily had the hoard sunk in the Rhine, where, according to popular belief, it still remains. Kriemhild's brothers were enraged at Hagen's new injury inflicted upon their sister, but they could not undo what had been done.

Thirteen years had passed since Siegfried's death, but Kriemhild bewailed his loss as vehemently as ever. She was about to withdraw to the abbey at Lorsch, between Worms and the Odenwald, which had been founded by Queen Ute, when suddenly new tidings came over the Rhine which entirely changed her resolution.

## CHAPTER II.

### OUTLINE OF THE NIBELUNGEN LIED. — PART II.

XX. — XXII. — Far away in the steppes of Hungary dwelt the powerful Etzel (Attila), king of the Huns, whose wife, Helke, renowned in saga-lore, happened to die at that time. As the king thought of seeking a new bride for himself, his friends and vassals advised him to woo Kriemhild, Siegfried's widow. Therefore Margrave Rüdiger of Bechlaren, one of his most esteemed liegemen, was despatched with a suitable retinue to Worms, where Gunther and all the nobles of the realm were in favor of accepting Etzel's proposal, if Kriemhild would consent. Hagen alone was opposed to it, but Gunther was firm.

To him gave answer Hagen: "I pray you, let that be !  
If ye would know King Etzel as he is known to me, —  
If ye will let him woo her, as I have heard you say,  
You will have ample reason to mourn for it some day."

Giselher recalled to Hagen the great wrongs which the latter had already heaped on Kriemhild, and told him to desist from further attempts to displease her.

The very mention of a new marriage appeared to fan the faithful widow's grief to greater flames. She

declared that she would never listen to any man's wooing, and for a long time persisted in refusing Etzel's proposal, even after Rüdiger had described to her in glowing colors the splendor of the realm that awaited her and the great number of powerful vassals that would be at her command. At last the brave knight succeeded in his endeavor.

Unto the royal lady he said: "Pray cease to moan;  
If of the Hunnish warriors you had but me alone,  
My faithful friends and champions and all my vassals strong,  
Most grievously would suffer he who had done you wrong."

At these words the gleaming spark of revenge in her breast was kindled to a lurid flame. She asked Rüdiger to promise her by an oath to aid her whenever any one should inflict injury upon her. Rüdiger with all his vassals took the oath, and the noble margrave did not suspect then what secret thoughts Siegfried's widow fostered in the depths of her heart, nor what sore distress would come from this oath to him and his whole house. After Rüdiger's solemn promise, and when he had quieted her scruples in regard to Etzel's being a pagan, Kriemhild accepted the proposal of the king of the Huns. She departed with her followers from Worms and arrived at Passau, where they were cordially received by Bishop Pilgrim, Queen Ute's brother. On the following morning they started for Bechlaren, where they enjoyed the hearty hospitality of Rüdiger's wife, Dame Götelind. At length they came to Tulln on the Danube, in Austria, where King Etzel himself, with a royal escort, had arrived to

meet his bride. Among Etzel's host one powerful hero was distinguished above all; this was Dietrich von Bern (Theodoric of Verona), the mighty chief of the Amelungs. Besides him there were Blödel, Etzel's brother; Irnfried of Thuringia; the Danes, Hawart and Iring; and many others.

The marriage of Etzel and Kriemhild was celebrated in Vienna with unheard-of pomp and display, and the queen was much surprised at seeing so many nations under Etzel's power; yet as she

Recalled how by the Rhine banks she dwelt in bygone years,  
There, by her noble consort, her eyes would fill with tears;  
Yet she concealed them ever that they were seen by none,  
Since after many sorrows great honors her were done.

XXIII.—XXIV. — Etzel fervently loved his wife, who was held in high esteem by all for her great kindness. Thus seven years passed and Kriemhild gave birth to a son, who was called Ortlieb. Yet she was often buried in silent grief.

She thought of many an honor which in the Niblung land  
Had been in her possession, and which Sir Hagen's hand  
Had seized and taken from her with Siegfried's overthrow;  
She pondered how some sorrow might yet befall her foe.

Six years more passed, and at last, twenty-six years after Siegfried's death, her plans were ripened. She pretended to have a great desire to see her relatives and friends, and at her request Etzel ordered his minstrels, Werbel and Schwemm, to set out immediately for Worms, and to invite the Burgundians to a great festival to be held at the coming midsummer.

Kriemhild secretly told the messengers that above all things they should see that Hagen did not stay behind.

When the messengers arrived at Worms, Gunther, his brothers, and the great vassals of the realm were ready to comply with Etzel's invitation. Hagen was strongly opposed to it, and his ire was aroused at the mere mention of the proposal. He said to Gunther, —

“You truly must remember the deeds we have done here;  
We therefore must of Kriemhild be e'er in constant fear.  
I pierced to death her husband and slew him with my hand:  
How shall we ever venture to ride to Etzel's land?”

Gunther replied that his sister had forgotten and forgiven the wrong of the past; yet Hagen did not waver from his resolution until Giselher intimated that he was afraid; *then* he declared that he would go, and even lead them to Etzel's realm.

XXV. — XXVIII. — One thousand and sixty knights, in gorgeous attire, with nine thousand yeomen, left Worms, despite the warnings of old Queen Ute, who said, —

“Last night I dreamed of sorrow, in anguish dire and dread, —  
That every winged creature in Burgundy was dead.”

Among this gallant host were Dankwart, Hagen's brother, and Volker of Alzey. In this connection it must be said that since the Nibelung hoard had come into the power of the Burgundians, the latter were named Nibelungs, just as formerly Siegfried, on

account of the same possession, had been called the Lord of the Nibelungs.

Hagen, henceforth the mighty bulwark of the Nibelungs, was the dauntless leader of the host which proudly rode up the river Main, then through Eastern Franconia, and on the twelfth morning reached the Danube. The river had overflowed its banks, and no boats were in sight. The king and his knights were greatly dismayed, but Hagen bade them remain by the stream, while he, fully armed, departed.

He strode along the river to find a ferryman.

At once he heard a splashing, — to listen he began :

Within a beauteous water some mermaids sported gay,

Who had been there for bathing beneath the cool, clear spray.

As soon as Hagen perceived them, he slyly stole up to them, but they escaped ; yet Hagen, well knowing that they could foretell future events, seized their raiment. In order to obtain it, one of the mermaids foretold that no such honors had ever been awarded to heroes in a foreign land as they should attain. Hagen was delighted, and returned their garments. Then the other mermaid spoke : —

“ ‘T was to obtain her raiment my cousin told thee wrong,  
If thou shalt go to Hunland, thou’lt rue it before long.

“ You should turn back most quickly ; while there is time,  
beware !

Because ye dauntless heroes were only bidden there,  
That all of you should perish and die in Etzel’s land ;  
Whoever rideth thither takes death within his hand.”

Thereunto replied Sir Hagen : “ Your cheating is in vain ;  
How could it ever happen that we should all be slain



In royal Etzel's kingdom through some one's deadly hate?"  
Then told she yet more plainly the tidings of their fate.

She said: "Be warned, Sir Hagen, because it needs must be  
That none of you bold heroes his home again shall see,—  
None save the royal chaplain. To us it is well known,  
That he to Gunther's country shall safe return alone."

As Hagen scorned the warning of the mermaids, they told him where to find the ferryman. "He is most wrathful," they said; "and besides, he is a friend of Sir Gelfrat, brother of the margrave, and a powerful lord in Bavaria. If he will not comply with your request, announce yourself as Amelrich and he will obey you." The ferryman at first remained deaf to Hagen's loud summons and offers of rich reward, but as soon as he heard Amelrich's name he rowed across the stream. Expecting to find his brother, whose name was Amelrich, he grew furious when he saw that he had been deceived. Hagen at once leaped into the bark, and besought him to take the Nibelung host and their horses across the river.

The ferryman retorted: "That never can be so,  
Since my good lords and masters have here full many a foe.  
I therefore put no strangers across into their land,  
And if thy life thou lovest, step quickly to the strand."

Since Hagen refused to obey, the ferryman seized an oar and smote him with such force that he staggered and fell on his knees; but Hagen wrathfully grasped his sword and struck off the ferryman's head. Then the bark was seized by the current, and Hagen succeeded only after much toil in reaching the

shore where the army was stationed. He himself plied the bark to and fro until all of them were safely landed. As he crossed over for the last time, and his gloomy soul brooded over the words of the mermaid, he suddenly seized the chaplain and cast him overboard. Although his lords heaped reproaches on him, he pushed the priest with his oar back into the flood, as the latter tried to swim after the bark. The chaplain turned about and safely reached the shore, protected by the hand of God, as he could not swim. As he stood there and shook his dripping garments, Hagen knew well that the mermaid had spoken the truth and that the beginning of the end had come. When the last voyage had been completed, he broke the bark in pieces.

The Nibelung army marched onward through Bavaria, and Volker of Alzey led them, as he was well acquainted with the country.

“Now take good heed,” said Hagen, “esquire as well as knight,

And follow friendly counsel; methinks this is but right,  
Since most unwholesome tidings to you I must explain.  
I know that we shall never see Burgundy again.

“Two mermaids told me truly, at early morn to-day,  
That ne’er we’ll see our country. What must be done, I’ll  
say :

Take up your arms, ye heroes, and for affray prepare;  
We here have powerful enemies, and warlike must we fare.

“I weened that those wise mermaids were bent upon deceit:  
They prophesied that no one of all of us shall greet  
Again his home and country, none save the priest alone;  
That I should therefore gladly have seen him drowned, I own.”

Hagen's words soon became known to the whole army, and the cheeks of many dauntless heroes waxed pallid, while Hagen's martial spirit was kindled to higher flames the more he was convinced that he fought against immutable fate. His unfaltering courage, together with his noble devotion to his liege lords, make him one of the grandest characters in this second part of our-poem.

After a bloody fight with the Bavarians, who had attacked the rear guard of the army to avenge the death of the ferryman, they reached Passau, and later the home of Rüdiger of Bechlaren, where they were cordially entertained by the margrave, his wife Gotelind, and his daughter Dietelind. The latter was betrothed to Giselher, to the great joy of all. Before the Nibelungs left Bechlaren, the margrave gave a beautiful sword to Gernot and the margravine presented Hagen with a costly shield. Many were the joys of the Nibelungs during their brief sojourn at Bechlaren. It was the last time that the light of peace and friendship shone upon them in its fullest glow, for dark night approached with threatening steps, and the gloomy sky was furrowed only by lightning flashes, showing how the scythe of death would mow down the noble warlike host.

When the Nibelungs had entered the land of the Huus, they were first met by Dietrich von Bern, who had come with his Amelung knights to salute and warn them. "Kriemhild," he said, "still bewails Siegfried's death."

There spoke to him Sir Hagen : "Long may she weep and cry,  
Since he received his death-blow full many a year passed by.  
Upon the king of Hunland she may her love bestow,  
For ne'er again comes Siegfried ; he's buried long ago.

"The death of that bold hero concerns us now no wise ;  
As long as lives Dame Kriemhild, great ills may yet arise."  
Replied the valiant Dietrich, of Bern the noble chief :  
"O thou, the Niblung's bulwark, beware of coming grief !"

The last words were addressed to Gunther, who, with his brothers, Hagen and Volker, drew aside to hear more particular news from Dietrich. The latter could only repeat that early every morning Kriemhild calls on Heaven to avenge her Siegfried's death.

"It cannot be prevented," replied the fiddler bold,  
The dauntless hero Volker, "what now we have been told.  
To royal Etzel's palace let us now ride and see  
What may the fate in Hunland of us, brave warriors, be."

As the Nibelungs pressed forward to Etzel's court, the eyes of the Huns were eagerly fastened on Hagen, for it was well known among them that he had slain Siegfried, the strongest of heroes. Hagen was well built, with broad chest and shoulders, and strong limbs. His countenance was awe-inspiring, his hair had become grizzled, and his carriage was majestic.

At the queen's command the yeomen were quartered at a place quite remote from that of the knights, yet Gunther intrusted the former to the care of Dankwart, Hagen's brother.

In the meantime fair Kriemhild approached and received her guests with treachery in her soul ; her brother Giselher alone she kissed and took by the

hand. When Hagen saw that, he fastened his helmet more securely and said, "After such a welcome, the bold knights will do well to be on their guard. Surely our journey to this festival has been an evil one." Kriemhild heard these words.

She said: "To him be welcome who likes to see you here.  
I owe you for your friendship no greeting and no cheer.  
But speak, what have you brought me from Worms across the  
Rhine,  
Why you should be so welcome within this realm of mine?"

Hagen answered scornfully, and as Kriemhild questioned him in regard to the Nibelung hoard, he replied, —

"My liege lords had it buried beneath the Rhine for aye;  
It truly must remain there unto the judgment day."

When the queen expressed again her sorrow for the lost treasure, and still more for the Lord of the Nibelungs,

Sir Hagen then responded: "In vain is all this care.  
How could I bring the treasure? I had enough to bear  
My coat of mail and buckler, my helmet bright and clear,  
My sword within its scabbard. Naught else have I brought  
here."

The queen thereon commanded unto the warriors all,  
That none should wear his weapons within the royal hall:  
"I'll care for them, ye heroes, intrust them unto me."  
"Upon my troth," said Hagen, "that nevermore shall be."

Kriemhild was then aware that the Nibelungs had been warned, and she threatened death to him who had done it. But as Dietrich von Bern declared that

he had warned them, Kriemhild blushed from shame and wrath, while she was filled with terror at Dietrich's threatening mien.

XXIX. — XXXII. — A remarkably fine picture is presented by Hagen's friendship with Volker, who was surnamed "the Fiddler," as he had a fiddle-bow one side of which was a keen-edged sword. Strong in their brotherhood of arms, they were ever ready to defy death, and to defy it with the certainty in their hearts that with every hour it drew inevitably nearer. Their friendship was steeled by the sufferings which they underwent and by the horrors amidst and against which they fought, and fought in vain.

Kriemhild endeavored now to execute her plans of revenge, especially as her anger had been increased by the sight of Siegfried's sword, which Hagen bore proudly and ostentatiously before her eyes. In the meantime Gunther and his chivalry were cordially received by King Etzel, who suspected nothing of Kriemhild's designs.

When night drew near, the guests were led to a spacious hall where luxurious beds had been prepared for them. Hagen and Volker, donning their armor, went to keep watch before the door. Volker leaned his shield against the outside wall of the house, and, taking his viol in his hand, seated himself on a stone beneath the entrance of the hall.

And with his viol's music resounded house and hall ;  
Great was beyond all measure his strength and skill withal.  
But sweeter then and softer the knight to play began,  
Until he lulled to slumber full many a careworn man.

When Volker saw that all were soundly asleep, he took his shield again, and together with Hagen continued to keep the lonely watch before the hall. In the realm of poetry will be found few grander pictures than the aspect of those two heroic figures passing to and fro in glittering armor amidst the deep silence and gloom of night. Their thoughts went back to the verdant meadows and the peaceful, blooming dales of the Rhine, while their undaunted souls defied the final doom that hung threatening over them and their friends.

On the following day a great festival was held at Etzel's palace in honor of his guests. While the knights took their seats in the festal hall, Kriemhild implored Dietrich von Bern to revenge her on her foes.

To her replied Sir Dietrich, with courtly speech and mien :  
" Desist from thy entreaties, most rich and mighty queen !  
For never have thy kinsmen to me done any wrong,  
That I should fight with heroes so noble and so strong.

" It does thee little honor, thou noble royal dame,  
To plot against thy kindred and at their life to aim.  
In trust upon thy bidding they came to Etzel's land,  
And unavenged must Siegfried remain by Dietrich's hand."

Kriemhild found a more willing tool for her bloody schemes in Blödel, Etzel's brother, who was won over by the queen's magnificent promises of lands and castles, and especially by her assurance that she would give him a beautiful lady for his wife. While Blödel departed with his warriors to attack the yeo-

men at their quarters, Kriemhild went to join her lord at the royal banquet.

After a long and desperate combat, in which Blödel fell by Dankwart's hand, all the Burgundian yeomen and twelve knights were slain by the Huns, who had attacked them with an overpowering force. The din of battle ceased, and the stalwart form of Dankwart alone towered terribly over his slain friends and the exasperated Huns. Casting a sad glance at the former,

He said: "Alas, my comrades, whose death I must bemoan!  
Now I must stand forsaken, among my foes alone."

Yet the dauntless knight cut his way to the door of the hall. When he was without, the Huns assailed him again, hoping to overcome him, as he had lost his shield in the combat.

He went before his enemies as a wild boar will flee  
The hounds throughout the forest. How could he bolder be?

XXXIII.—XXXVIII.—At last Dankwart, streaming with the blood of the slain Huns, rushed into the festal hall where Etzel and many of his vassals entertained the Nibelungs.

Then shouted forth Sir Dankwart unto a brave compeer:  
"Too long, O brother Hagen, you have been sitting here.  
To you and God in heaven must I bewail our woe,—  
The knights and all the yeomen at quarters are laid low."

When Hagen had learned how the carnage had taken place,



He said : " Now, brother Dankwart, defend the door with might ;

Let not come out hereafter a single Hunnish knight."

Shortly before Dankwart had entered the hall, the young son of Etzel and Kriemhild had been shown to the guests, and the anger of Etzel and of the Huns was aroused by some disdainful remarks of Hagen in regard to the child. The Huns, enraged at Dankwart's guarding the door, consulted with one another in whispers, whereupon Hagen exclaimed, —

" I have heard very often of Kriemhild many a tale,  
How she her heart's deep sorrow will ne'er cease to bewail.  
Now drink we the remembrance,\* with royal wine we'll cheer.  
The youthful prince of Hunland must be the first one here."

The terrible words were followed by the bloody deed. Hagen smote off Ortlieb's head, which fell into Kriemhild's lap. Volker wielded his sword fiddle-bow with such fury that the helmets of the Huns resounded terribly from its blows. Gunther and his brothers had at first attempted to bring about a cessation of hostilities, but the fury of Hagen and Volker rendered their efforts fruitless, and they themselves joined in the conflict.

Although King Etzel's liegemen fought well against their foe,  
One saw the dauntless strangers there striding to and fro.

\* The German *Minne* is used here in its primitive meaning. To drink *Minne* meant to drink in remembrance and in honor of the dead. It took place at the close of the feast. Thus Hagen ended the feast by drinking in remembrance of Siegfried ; but the draught was the king's wine, i. e. the blood of his child and of his liegemen. (Vilmar, p. 75.)

Their glittering swords they wielded in Etzel's hall around;  
On all sides from the combat rang forth a ghastly sound.

Volker joined Dankwart at the door to keep off the Huns, who from without furiously assailed the entrance to help their comrades within. While the contest grew fiercer, Kriemhild, filled with dismay, called on Dietrich von Bern to protect her. The noble chief of the Goths leaped upon a table, and his powerful voice resounded through the palace like the blast from a buffalo horn amidst the din of battle. At Gunther's command the tumult and slaughter ceased for an instant, while Dietrich demanded permission to withdraw from the palace with his followers. Gunther readily consented, and Dietrich, with the terrified Kriemhild leaning on one arm and Etzel on the other, left the hall, followed by six hundred Amelung knights. The same permission was granted to Rüdiger and his liegemen.

Hardly had they left, when the combat between the Nibelungs and the Huns within the hall began again with renewed fury, until every Hun in the palace was slain. Hagen and Volker haughtily strode about before the hall. At Kriemhild's instigation and promises of reward, Iring of Denmark attacked Hagen, but was slain by the latter after a heroic combat.

As evening drew near, the Huns approached in greater numbers than before, and again a fearful strife began between the contending foes.

Of such a murderous battle the queen had never thought;  
When she began her plotting, she gladly would have sought

That no one else but Hagen should have to lose his life ;  
Yet worked the evil spirit that all must fall in strife.

The Nibelungs, exhausted by the constant fighting, and seeing that the hall was surrounded by the Huns, preferred a speedy death to slow suffering, and therefore demanded an interview with Etzel.

The guests he thus accosted : "Speak what you want of me,  
Ye ween to sue for friendship? That hardly now can be.  
Ye slew my child, together with many a kinsman true ;  
Both peace and friendship ever shall be denied to you."

Gunther replied that the slaying of the yeomen by the Huns was the cause of all the following combats : but Etzel was not to be appeased. Then Gernot demanded that they should be allowed to leave the hall and to die fighting in the open space, since die they must. Etzel and the Huns would have complied with this demand ; but Kriemhild interfered, saying that her kinsmen, when once refreshed by the cool wind, would slay all their enemies. Then her youngest brother, whom she had loved most, made a touching appeal to the frenzied queen.

Young Giselher addressed her : "Belovèd sister mine,  
How could I have imagined when I across the Rhine  
Into King Etzel's country came at thy kind behest,  
That by such pain and sorrow I here should be oppressed.

"I e'er to thee was faithful, nor caused thee any grief.  
I rode into this country with such a strong belief  
That thou to me wert friendly, most noble sister mine.  
Bestow on us thy mercy ! Naught else thou canst design."

Giselher's entreaty was not without exerting some softening influence on the queen's heart ; her sisterly

love was not yet entirely quenched by her thoughts of revenge, and she promised to spare the lives of her brothers if they would deliver Hagen into her hands. This proposal was indignantly rejected by all, and Kriemhild's fury increased as her last attempt to get Hagen into her power seemed to be frustrated. She turned to the Huns and said, —

“Let none now leave the palace, none of those warriors all;  
And then on its four corners I'll bid you fire the hall.”

The cruel command was at once obeyed by the Huns, after all the Nibelungs who had stood without the hall had been driven within. The royal brothers and their vassals stood faithfully by each other in this fatal hour of severest trial.

Seized by the wind, the palace blazed up in fiery glow.  
I ween, no heroes ever encountered such a woe.

Tormented by the heat and smoke, and still more by the unquenchable thirst, the Nibelungs came nigh despairing.

In such distress spöke Hagen : “Ye noble knights and good,  
Whoe'er by thirst is tortured, may take a draught of blood;  
In such a heat and suffering it better is than wine.  
Naught else for food or drinking you'll find here, I opine.”

Hagen's advice was followed. The burning rafters fell thickly from the roof, but the knights pressed close to the stone walls and extinguished the fire-flakes in the blood under their feet. Thus the terrible night wore away. At morning, to the great surprise of Kriemhild, six hundred Nibelungs were

still found living among the smoking ruins. They were at once attacked by twelve hundred Huns, but the latter were slain, every one of them, by Gunther and his vassals.

One of the most touching pictures in these last struggles of the Nibelungs is Rüdiger of Bechlaren. The queen reminded him of his vow at Worms before she consented to marry Etzel, while he thought of the friends whom he had conducted hither. Rüdiger said to the queen, —

“Quite truly hast thou spoken, thou noble, royal dame,  
That I for thee should venture my life and eke my fame.  
To lose my soul’s salvation for thee, I ne’er have sworn;  
I brought here to this country thy brothers, nobly born.”

But Kriemhild strongly reminded him again of his oath to wreak vengeance on any one who should harm her, and both she and Etzel begged the margrave in the most humble and piteous manner to aid them.

Rüdiger, whose heart was rent in twain by the consciousness of his duty towards his liege lord and by the obligations of friendship towards the three royal brothers, exclaimed, —

“Alas! I, God-forsaken, have come to see this day!  
And all my lofty honors I must now cast away;  
My faithfulness and virtue, which God bestowed on me.  
O bounteous God in heaven, let death now set me free!

“Whomever I abandon, to take the other side,  
I needs must do what’s evil, whatever may betide;  
And should I both relinquish, then scorn me man and wife.  
May he alone now guide me, the Author of my life!”

Being aware that he could no longer resist Etzel's command, his thoughts turned to his home.

“ I trust unto your pity   my wife, my child withal,  
Besides the homeless beings   within Bechlaren's wall.”

After this farewell he bade his vassals arm themselves at once ; and as Giselher saw Rüdiger with five hundred warriors approaching the palace, he was rejoiced at the supposed succor. Yet he was speedily disappointed ; for Rüdiger laid his shield at his feet, and shouted to the Nibelungs that his friendship with them was ended, and that henceforth he would be their foe. Gunther, Gernot, and Giselher conjured him to think of his fidelity towards them, but Rüdiger expressed his heartfelt sorrow at the dire necessity to which he had to submit, and wished that they were at the Rhine and he were dead. Deeply impressive were the appeals of Gernot when he reminded him of the sword which he had received from him at Bechlaren, and with which he might be forced to slay the giver ; touching were Giselher's farewell words to the father of his bride, — yet Rüdiger, although broken-hearted, clung to his duty, and the Nibelungs well understood his pain. The combat was about to begin when Hagen told Rüdiger that the shield which he had received as a gift from the margravine during their visit at Bechlaren was hewn asunder. Rüdiger offered him his own shield.

However grim was Hagen,   however hard his mood,  
Yet at this gift he softened,   which that great hero good  
Had then bestowed upon him   even as the end drew nigh ;  
Full many a noble champion   began with him to sigh.

“ May God in heaven reward you, most noble Rüdiger !  
Your like is not encountered on earth here anywhere ;  
Ye, who to homeless heroes give such kind gift away, —  
May God grant that your virtue shall live and last for aye.”

All who witnessed the sad spectacle were moved to tears, especially when Hagen declared that he would not touch Rüdiger in the approaching strife. The same promise was made by Volker. Then Rüdiger seized a shield and furiously assailed his foes. The latter allowed the margrave and his vassals to enter the hall of death in order to slay them more surely. Rüdiger fought with inexpressible rage and killed many of Gunther's vassals, until Gernot challenged him to single combat.

Their keen-edged swords they wielded; no help was 'gainst  
their might.

Brave Rüdiger, assailing Gernot, the dauntless knight,  
Smote through his flint-hard helmet so that the blood streamed  
down ;

Yet fiercely him requited that chief of great renown.

The margrave's gift he lifted on high against his foe ;  
However deadly wounded, he dealt him such a blow  
As cut his shield asunder, and eke his helmet broke :  
The beauteous Gotlind's consort fell dead beneath the stroke.

Thus both were laid low, each by the other's equal strength. The fury of the Nibelungs at seeing Gernot slain grew more fierce, and all the vassals of Rüdiger speedily met their doom. The corpse of the noble margrave was shown to Kriemhild, and immoderate were her lamentations and those of Etzel when they knew the terrible loss they had sustained.

Their cries resounded through the palace, and at last Dietrich von Bern was apprised of the mournful tidings, which he would hardly believe. He sent his faithful friend and vassal Hildebrand to learn from the Nibelungs themselves what had happened. Hildebrand went forth, escorted, contrary to Dietrich's command, by all the Amelung knights, among whom Wolfhart, Hildebrand's nephew, was the most distinguished. When Hildebrand asked for Rüdiger's corpse in order to bury it, the demand was refused, and soon the Amelungs rushed to the attack. The Nibelungs well knew that their fatal hour had at last come, and they fought with the frenzy and valor of doomed giants. Volker, the fiddler bold, next to Hagen the bulwark of the Nibelungs, fell by the hand of Hildebrand.

But in the meantime Wolfhart had twice amidst the fray  
Struck down King Gunther's warriors, who came across his  
way ;

Now for the third time cut he a path throughout the hall,  
And caused by his great power full many a hero's fall.

Giselher beheld with terror Wolfhart's slaughter among his friends, and turned against him. After a fierce struggle the two knights gave grim death to each other. Then Hagen, furious at the death of his friend Volker, met Hildebrand, who was enraged at the overthrow of his beloved nephew. Hagen wielded the sword Balmung, which he had possessed since Siegfried's death, and smote through Hildebrand's hauberk, inflicting a severe wound on him. The latter, covering himself with his shield, fled. Of



the Nibelungs all, save Gunther and Hagen, had been slain in the hall of carnage; of the Amelungs none had escaped, except Hildebrand.

Hildebrand brought the sad tidings to Dietrich, whom he found sorely oppressed with dire forebodings. The aged knight recounted all that had happened, and great was Dietrich's grief at the certain news of Rüdiger's death; yet greater was his sorrow and surprise when he heard that all his men, save Hildebrand, had been slain.

Dietrich approached the two remaining Nibelungs, who in lonely grandeur stood before the hall and saw him coming. Dietrich demanded that they should atone for their deeds. He said to Gunther, —

“Yield up yourself as hostage, and Hagen too, your man,  
And then I will protect you as well as e'er I can,  
That no one here in Hunland shall do a harm to you;  
And you will find most surely that I'll be kind and true.”

Hagen scorned the idea of surrender, when Dietrich again exclaimed, —

“Upon my troth I promise, and pledge thereto my hand,  
That I with you together will ride into your land;  
With honor I'll escort you, unless I needs must die;  
For you shall be forgotten, my boundless misery.”

Hagen refused for the second time to heed the noble Dietrich's request, and nothing was left for the latter but to force compliance with his demands. Hagen rushed down from the stairway with the Nibelung sword Balmung in his hand, and attacked Dietrich, who well knew the bravery of his foe. After a

fierce combat Hagen was severely wounded ; but Dietrich, thinking that there would be little honor for him in slaying an enemy wearied by constant fighting, enclasped him in his powerful arms and bore him captive to Kriemhild. The queen, filled with fiendish delight at seeing her archenemy in her power, greatly praised Dietrich ; but the high-minded hero bade her spare Hagen's life. While Hagen was thrown into a dungeon where none could see him, Dietrich went back to the hall. There Gunther assailed him, yet he overcame the Burgundian king and bore him in bonds to Kriemhild. The latter bade a mocking welcome to her brother, while Dietrich enjoined her to treat fairly the two homeless knights. Gunther was led to another prison than the one into which Hagen had been cast, so that they could not see one another. The queen, teeming with glowing joy that now at last revenge might be accomplished, went to Hagen's cell and promised to spare his life if he would reveal the place where the Nibelung hoard had been concealed. Hagen, undaunted despite his fetters, declared that as long as one of his lords should live, he would not disclose the secret. The frenzied queen at once had Gunther's head cut off, and she herself bore it by the hair to Hagen. When the latter had recovered from the horror with which the deed filled his soul, he exclaimed, —

“ Now all to thine own pleasure has to an end been brought,  
And wholly so it happened as always I had thought.

“ No one now knows the treasure, save God and me alone ;  
To thee, infernal woman, it never shall be known.”

Kriemhild, once the very type of meek and gentle womanhood, seized the sword Balmung, and with one stroke fell Hagen's head. Etzel was struck with dismay at the ghastly deed, and Hildebrand, furious at seeing the mighty hero thus dealt with by the frenzied woman, grasped his sword and killed the queen.

The royal feast was ended in sorrow and in pain ;  
As joy draws ever sorrow behind it in its train.

As Vilmar says, with this tone of deep sadness in which the last sounds of our poem die away, it returns to the primitive tone in which it began.

## CHAPTER III.\*

### I. THE NIBELUNG EPICS AND SAGAS IN THE NORTH.

### II. THE LAY OF SIEGFRIED.

I. As has been mentioned above, the Nibelungen Lied in its present shape was composed towards the end of the twelfth, or at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It was then the brilliant era of the Hohenstaufen emperors (1138-1254), when the courts of Frederick Barbarossa and of Frederick II., themselves the very types of mediæval German knighthood, were adorned by the flower of a noble chivalry. It was then the renowned epoch of the "Minnesänger," when the richly flowing stream of national greatness pervaded the hearts of all, when the highest ideals held forth by poetry were personal bravery and honor to woman. But while the composition of the Nibelungen Lied belongs to one period, the world that is mirrored in the poem belongs to another. At the time when our epic was composed, Germany had been christianized for many centuries, and the feudal sys-

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\* Some pages of this chapter, and a few remarks in the fifth chapter, have been reprinted from the author's introduction to his translation of Emanuel Geibel's "Brunhild."

tem was then firmly established ; yet the beginning of the Nibelung myths and sagas must be sought at an epoch when most of the German tribes, proud of their freedom, still hunted through the primeval forests ; when the king was little more than the chosen leader in war ; when Odin and Thor were worshipped ; when the sacred trees had not yet fallen under the axe of the Christian missionaries, and the martial spirit of the warriors was kindled to higher flames by the joys that waited for them at the feasts of Valhal. It is evident that in the hands of a Christian composer of the Nibelungen Lied, living at the end of the twelfth century, a time so strongly imbued with the spirit of the crusades and feudalism, many of the primitive ideas must have undergone important changes. Thus it happens that the Nibelungen Lied appears at least partly in a garb that is foreign to the source from which it came. But although we have to look elsewhere for the earlier records on which the subject of our poem is based, the Nibelungen Lied, such as it is, remains a brilliant monument of mediæval Germany, and bears witness to the martial spirit of the Middle Ages, which could not forget the heroic deeds of the past.

The Teutonic nations that had made an end of the Roman empire, or had settled near the Roman provinces, were early converted to Christianity, and at the same time powerfully influenced by the civilization of their conquered foes, — an event in history beautifully described in Jordan's "Nibelunge": —

Als unsere Ahnen den Erdfreis erobert,  
 Verloren den Himmel die heimischen Götter,  
 Das Reich war entrissen der ewigen Roma,  
 Doch zu gelten begann sie als Geisterfürstin.  
 Es war ihre Sendung zu sanfterer Sitte  
 Mit Kreuz und Krummstab die Krieger zu zähmen.

While Christianity became triumphant in Western and Southern Germany, and the zeal of its priests well-nigh eradicated every trace of the former paganism; while Latin was the language of the Roman Church, and the traditions in the vernacular tongue were doomed to oblivion and destruction,—the primitive belief of our forefathers continued to flourish in parts of Northern Germany and especially in the Scandinavian kingdoms. The Saxons were finally converted to Christianity as late as the beginning of the ninth century, during the reign of Karl the Great (Charlemagne), and then only by force of arms after a thirty years' cruel war. This event proved to be the death-blow to the ancient religion in Germany. It is true that Karl the Great ordered a collection of ancient lays ("barbara et antiquissima carmina") to be made, as Eginhard relates, and furthermore it can hardly be doubted that it included songs on the German hero-sagas; yet it is possible that it contained only Frankish lays, celebrating the deeds of Karl's ancestors, as Professor Müllenhoff thinks,\* and besides it must be said that the collection has never been discovered. Indeed, Karl's son and successor Ludwig (Louis le débonnaire), who spoke Latin and Greek as well as his native tongue, despised those

\* Zür Geschichte der Nibelunge Not, p. 74.

songs which he had been obliged to learn by heart in his youth;\* and through his fear of the Church, his monkish zeal and want of character and interest in national affairs, they were destroyed. Yet in spite of these unfavorable circumstances many of the early traditions of our ancestors were preserved, and rescued forever from the undeserved fate of oblivion by another people of the great Teutonic race,—by the warlike tribes of the North.

During the latter part of the ninth century Iceland, the remotest corner of Europe, was discovered and peopled by a number of noble and high-minded families who had emigrated from Norway. They carried with them the ancient heirlooms of the Teutonic race: its language, manners, religion; its love for song and poetry and for the beauties and sublimity of nature; its reverence for woman, its respect for the sanctity of marriage, for the sacredness of hospitality,—ay, all those national characteristics which at the beginning of the Christian era had filled the souls of their Roman foes with admiration. Great as was their love of home, their love of freedom was greater still; and thus the despotism of their king Harold Haarfager (Fair-hair) drove them forth from prosperous Norway to the barren shores of Iceland. Uhland very beautifully remarks that “Iceland—bristling with snow-clad mountains; treeless by reason of the sharp winds; the pasture ground of herds which are devoid of the ornament of horns; surrounded by icy

\* “Poetica carmina gentilia quæ in juventute didicerat, respuit, nec legere nec audire nec docere voluit.” — *Thegan de Gestis Ludovici*.

floes on which the bear descends from Greenland; measuring time by winters and nights instead of summers and days — does not seem to have been created to be the garden of poetry. Yet, as there the ice-crust often cracks and the Hecla casts forth its flames, as from frozen swamps hot springs rise on high, so, likewise, poetry defied the ice. It is easily conceivable why the mighty and grave character of Northern nature could not but communicate itself to Northern poetry." As the ancestral freedom bloomed in their new abode, the precious heirloom of their myths and hero-sagas was cherished by all. And when at last, during the beginning of the eleventh century, Christianity was introduced among the free people of this Northern Thule, the preachers of the true religion did not come with the crucifix in one hand and the sword in the other; nay, the conversion of Iceland was due to native priests, who, while firmly believing the gospel, cherished the language and customs of their home and preserved the traditions of their ancestors. Moreover, Teutonic paganism had then arrived at the last stage of its existence, and was fully prepared to die a natural death, — a condition of things well described by Professor Max Müller: —

"The Icelandic missionaries had peculiar advantages in their relation to the system of paganism which they came to combat. Nowhere else, perhaps, in the whole history of Christianity, has the missionary been brought face to face with a race of gods who were believed by their own worshippers to be doomed to death. The missionaries had only to proclaim that



Balder was dead, that the mighty Odin and Thor were dead. The people knew that these gods were to die, and the message of the one ever-living God must have touched their ears and hearts with comfort and joy."

The ancient lays and sagas were collected in Iceland, and a rich national literature grew up, — national in every respect, since the old gods were not transformed, as in Germany, into saints or devils.

But what are the treasures preserved for the whole Teutonic race by faithful Iceland? In the year 1643 Brynjolf Sveinsson, bishop of Skalholt, discovered a number of manuscripts, and, supposing them to have been collected by Saemund (born 1056, died 1133), he called the work "Edda Saemundar hinns froda," i. e. "Edda of Saemund the Wise." The name "Edda" signifies in Icelandic "great-grandmother," and in the figurative language of the North that word was sometimes employed as a term for denoting generally the famous tales of the past, especially as it was the aged mistress of the house who customarily related the history of bygone days to her children and grandchildren. Moreover, the name "Edda" had been applied before, particularly to a work supposed to have been written by Snorre Sturleson (born 1178, died 1241), the author of "Heimskringla," the great history of the North. Snorre's collection was known before Sveinsson's discovery, and is somewhat like the Edda of Saemund, but of later origin. The two Eddas have therefore been distinguished from each other by the terms "Elder Edda," or the Edda

of Saemund, and "Younger Edda," or the Edda of Snorre Sturleson. The former is also often called the Poetical Edda, as it consists principally, but not entirely, of songs, while the Younger Edda forms a collection of narratives in prose, and is therefore frequently called the Prose Edda. The first part of the Elder Edda relates to the gods of the North, and the second contains the ancient hero-songs, while the Younger Edda, of which an excellent translation by Prof. R. B. Anderson has appeared, is appropriately called by the latter a sort of commentary upon the Elder Edda.

The poems of the Edda containing the Nibelung story belong, in the form in which they have been handed down to us, mostly to the eighth century; yet they themselves originated from songs of a still earlier period of Teutonic antiquity, probably of the sixth century. They do not form a narrative epic, like the Nibelungen Lied, but are a series of lays, independent of each other, each of which takes up a particular subject, while upon the whole they present the Nibelung tradition in a consistent and uniform manner. Unfortunately there are several pages wanting in the so-called *codex regius*, the source of all the later manuscripts of the Elder Edda. They contained a very important part of Sigurd's life, from his first meeting with Brynhild to his death, and their contents can only be inferred from the Volsunga Saga, a work to be mentioned hereafter. In this connection it seems proper to quote the words of Wilhelm Grimm : \*

\* Heldensage, p. 4.

"Among the documents for the native saga I give a place to the songs of the Edda, because I am convinced that their primitive material is German, for they are bound to Germany by the principal persons who appear in them and by the places where the events occur. The saga, when transplanted, may entirely alter or exchange names and localities ; but when it still recognizes its home abroad, it furnishes by that fact a great proof of its descent." There appears to be no doubt that the saga-lore wandered from the south to the north, and thus it is evident that the early traditions of our forefathers, as transmitted to us by the Scandinavian people, cannot be free from a local coloring ; nor is it always easy to decide what is the common property of the whole Teutonic race, and what belongs to the later development of the Northern literature on the one hand and to that of the German on the other. Yet it is certain that the treasure preserved for us by Iceland in the two Eddas is of paramount value. Besides these two works there exist many Northern sagas which treat of the Nibelung subject, among which the following must be mentioned here.

The Volsunga Saga, called so after Volsung, the sire of Sigurd (the German Siegfried), the hero of all the Nibelung stories, is partly a paraphrase in prose of the songs of the Elder Edda, and was probably collected during the twelfth century. This work is of great importance, as its compiler knew some of the songs of the Edda that have been lost, and it contains also an account of Sigurd's ancestors, not to be

found in the Elder Edda. The manuscripts of the Volsunga Saga give also the Ragnar Lodbrok Saga, which is however of little weight so far as our object is concerned. The later kings of the house of Harold Haarfager claimed to trace their descent from Sigurd through Ragnar Lodbrok, whose wife Aslaug was supposed to be a daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild (Brunhild); and this saga seems to owe its existence, at least partly, to the purpose of glorifying the Norwegian dynasty.

The sagas mentioned hereafter are interesting and of some importance in several instances, yet they are of later composition, and therefore upon the whole of less value for the history of the early development of the Nibelung stories. Thus, whenever in the course of our remarks reference is made to the *Northern traditions*, the term is understood to include only the two Eddas and the Volsunga Saga, and not the following works.

The Thidrek' or Vilkina Saga, including the Niflunga Saga, collected towards the middle of the thirteenth century, was composed from the saga-lore of Germany, at least to a great extent, as is repeatedly stated by its author. This saga bears the impress of later romantic tales in some of its parts, especially in the account of Siegfried's birth, while other portions, based on old Saxon songs and tales, agree with the Edda and Volsunga Saga; again others are derived from later German lays, and agree in many points with the Nibelungen Lied, particularly with its second part. Thus Kriemhild, in this saga as in the German

epic, wreaks vengeance on her brothers for the death of Siegfried, and not, as in the Eddas and Volsunga Saga, on her second husband for the death of her brothers. The name "Vilkina" is commonly supposed to be related to the word "Vilkinus," the sire of the semi-fabulous "Wieland, the smith," of whom the Elder Edda speaks in the "Völundarkvidha." The word "Vilkinus" is probably also connected with "Viking," a common term for the bold seafaring Norsemen. The title "Thidrek Saga" is more appropriate in so far as this collection includes an account of Dietrich von Bern. On the following pages reference to this saga is made only occasionally, as it will appear evident, from the foregoing remarks, that this work can have upon the whole no very decisive or important influence in the comparison of the various traditions of our subject.

The Nornagestsaga from the fourteenth century is based on the songs of the Elder Edda. The title of the saga is derived from "Gest," a native of the town Graening in Denmark. His life depended on a candle which a kind Norn had given to him, and he was therefore called "Nornagest" (the guest of the Norn). He lived three hundred years, and related as an eyewitness Sigurd's (Siegfried's) deeds and death and other incidents of the Nibelung story to King Olaf Tryggvason. He was then baptized, lighted the candle at the king's command, and died. "Nornagest," says Köppen, "is evidently the saga itself, the pagan hero-saga, which, old, and tired of life, expired

at the court of the strictly Christian king after the torch of the ancient religion had been extinguished by Christianity." \*

The old Danish folk-lore (from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century) contains songs belonging to the Nibelung subject, either based on the ancient Northern traditions, or related to the second part of the Nibelungen Lied. But what is most remarkable is the fact that on the lonely isles of Faroe the old saga has so deeply penetrated the heart of the people that the songs of Siegfried and Brunhild resound on those barren shores even at the present day. It is true that the majestic simplicity which forms such a striking characteristic of the Elder Edda has almost wholly disappeared in the old Danish epics and in the songs of Faroe, although they exhibit still much rugged beauty and tender love-strains. The heroes excel, however, more in unnatural than in supernatural deeds, and also remind us sometimes of the romantic character belonging to the saga-cycle of Charlemagne.

Before presenting the Nibelung subject as found in the *Northern traditions*, it seems proper to refer to Prof. R. B. Anderson's excellent work on "Norse Mythology," to his vivid and enthusiastic description, and to his clear and authentic account of the Asa-worship.

A knowledge of Northern mythology is not only interesting and valuable,—since the ancient belief of the Northern nations was, if not in every par-

\* Quoted also in Raszmann's *Deutsche Heldensage*, Vol. I. p. 44.

ticular, yet at least in its general nature, the same as that of the whole Teutonic race,—but, moreover, an acquaintance with the early religion of our forefathers is well-nigh indispensable to the student of the Nibelung sagas. Yet as the subject of Teutonic mythology can be only slightly touched in this volume, Professor Anderson's book is heartily recommended. It is scarcely necessary to call also the attention of those sufficiently versed in German to the admirable works on German Mythology by the famous scholars, J. Grimm and K. Simrock.

A full account of the ancestors and kindred of Sigurd (Siegfried) appears in the Volsunga Saga; the Elder Edda contains the beautiful songs of Helgi Hundingsbani (the slayer of Hunding), a half-brother of Sigurd, but makes only brief mention of his father Sigmund. It is very probable that there were also in the Elder Edda originally songs glorifying the deeds of Sigmund and his son Sinfjötli (the half-brother of Helgi and Sigurd), as can be inferred from the existence of Sinfjötllök (the end of Sinfjötli), a tale in prose inserted by the compiler of the Elder Edda. It is not necessary for our purpose to describe the various adventures of the Volsung race previous to the birth of Sigurd, nor need we mention the later romantic tales of the Thidrek Saga about his birth and education, as they seem to be a mere imitation of the well-known Genovefa story. The following sketch is founded on or condensed from the two Eddas and the Volsunga Saga, the latter partly ac-

according to the excellent translation by Magnusson and Morris.

The three gods—Odin, Loki, and Hoenir—set out to explore the world, and came to the cascade of the dwarf Andvari, where they found an otter eating a salmon. Loki, ever fond of mischief, cast a stone at the otter and killed it. The gods, well pleased with their prey, flayed the otter and departed. In the evening they came to the dwelling of a peasant, called Hreidmar, from whom they asked a night's lodging. When they showed him what they had captured, Hreidmar called his sons, Fafnir and Regin, and told them that their brother Otter, who at times took the semblance of an otter, had been slain, and by whom. Then Hreidmar and his sons laid hands upon the gods, overpowered them, and demanded as ransom for their lives that they should fill the otter-skin with gold and cover it over with gold. The cunning Loki was at once despatched by Odin to the home of the swarthy elves to find the ransom. He came to the cascade and caught the dwarf Andvari, who lived there in the likeness of a pike. Andvari was forced by Loki to give up to him all the treasure he owned, and which was concealed in the neighboring rocks. Only one gold *ring* he wished to keep, and eagerly besought Loki not to take it away from him, for through its power he could procure for himself another treasure. But Loki took also the ring from him. Then the dwarf returned to his rock, and uttered a curse by which the gold, and especially the ring, should be the bane of every man who should



possess it thereafter. Loki, well pleased with the result of his errand, said that he would take care to bring the curse to the ears of him who was to receive it. Then he returned to Hreidmar's home and showed the gold to Odin. When the latter saw the ring, he kept it and gave the rest of the gold to Hreidmar. The otter-skin was then filled, set on its feet, and covered with gold. Thereupon Hreidmar came forth, examined it, and found an uncovered hair on the muzzle. He bade Odin cover that too, or the ransom would not be accepted. Odin gave up the ring, called Andvaranaut (Andvari's loom), and covered the hair with it. Then only, Loki informed Hreidmar of the curse that was pronounced on the gold; but Hreidmar mocked at the threat, and the gods departed. Hardly had they left, when the curse was fulfilled on the possessor of the ring. Fafnir and Regin demanded their share of the treasure (the weregild for their brother) from their father, but the latter refused and was therefore murdered during his sleep by Fafnir. Then Regin asked his brother to give him half of the paternal inheritance; but Fafnir, threatening to slay him, took the shape of a dragon and kept watch over his treasure.

As Raszmann says, "The story of the primitive acquisition of the hoard unveils the tragic background of this part of our saga; the curse which Andvari's wrath laid upon the hoard hovers about it, as it were, with demoniac power, until it has been fulfilled. Like Fafnir and Regin, the grandest figures of our saga, who fill the world with the splendor of their glory,

are tempted to gain the immense treasure, and are therefore irresistibly involved in the terrible sway of the curse. Their endeavor to obtain the hoard calls up within their bosom the darkest powers of the human heart, — treason, perjury, assassination, and dastardly, guileful treachery. Driven by the might of these powers, they rush on so much the more irresistibly to meet the destruction in which they are involved, the more vividly the voices of prophecy and warning place it before their soul, until at last, amidst the most pathetic contempt of death, even those have fallen who, alone beside the Aesir,\* know the place where, “in the rolling waves of the Rhine, the val-rings† glitter,” and the gold has returned to the spirits of the deep whence it originally came. The fatality attached to the possessor of the hoard is still known in the Nibelungen Lied, yet the story of its original acquisition is but dimly remembered.”‡

Regin fled, and, being aware that he could not overpower the monster, as he was of a dwarfish stature, searched for a mightier one than himself to slay the dragon. He came to King Hjalprek in the land of the Franks,§ and was charged by him to bring up young Sigurd, who then happened to live at his court.

Sigurd traced his descent from Odin, the chief of the Teutonic gods, through his sire Volsung and his

\* The asas, or gods.

† The rings of death or strife ; cf. “valkyr.”

‡ Raszmann, *Deutsche Heldensage*, Vol. I. p. 106.

§ So in the Nornagestsaga. In the Younger Edda Hjalprek is king of Thiodi ; in the Volsunga Saga, of Denmark, i. e. probably Jutland.

father Sigmund; his mother was named Hjordis. Sigmund had fallen in battle against his old foes, the sons of Hunding, before Sigurd was born, and Hjordis gave birth to her son at Hjalprek's court, whither she had been brought as a captive by Alf, the king's son. The latter, at the head of some vikings, had found her on the battle-field near Sigmund's corpse. Thus Sigurd was really born a captive, but his mother afterward became Alf's wife, and the king had Sigurd brought up in a manner befitting his descent.

Regin told Sigurd the story of the hoard taken from Andvari, for it was on Sigurd that he founded his hope of acquiring the treasure. After obtaining the famous horse Grani (gray) through Odin's help, Sigurd bade Regin make a sword for him. Regin made one and gave it into Sigurd's hands. The latter took it and smote it into the anvil, and the sword broke. Then Regin forged another sword, but it broke like the first. Thereupon Sigurd bade him make a sword from the broken pieces of the sword called Gram (i. e. wrath), which had belonged to Sigurd's father and was originally a gift of Odin. Regin made a sword, and Sigurd smote it into the anvil and cleft it, but the sword did not break. Afterward he went to the river Rhine with a lock of wool and threw it up against the stream, and it fell asunder when it met the sword. After avenging the death of his father on his foes, Sigurd went to the Guita-heath (glittering heath), where Fafnir lay. As the monster came down from the cliff and crept along the heath towards the water, the earth shook all about him and

he snorted forth poison on all the way before him. Then Sigurd, from a pit which he had dug, thrust his sword under the dragon's left shoulder as he crept over it, so that it sank in up to the hilt. Fafnir, feeling that he had received his death-wound, reproached Sigurd with being a bondsman, referring to the fact that Sigurd was born while his mother was a captive. Sigurd replied: "Albeit I was a bondsman, yet was I never bound, and thou hast found me free enough." Fafnir warned Sigurd that the gold and the red rings would be his bane and that Regin would betray him. Regin had been away while Sigurd slew Fafnir; but when the latter was dead he came back, and after some angry conversation with Sigurd he asked him to roast Fafnir's heart for him. While Sigurd roasted it on a spit, and the juice came out of the heart, he touched it to see whether it was fully roasted. In doing so he burned his finger and put it into his mouth. As soon as Fafnir's heart-blood touched his tongue he understood the voice of the birds, and heard how some eagles chattered with each other and warned him of Regin's evil designs. He followed their advice and struck off Regin's head, ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both. Then he hearkened again to what the eagles said. They spoke of the hall that stands high upon Hindarfiall, around which sweep the blazing flames. There the maiden sleeps, since Odin stung her with the sleep-thorn, and no one dares wake her against the will of the Norns.

Sigurd rode along the trail of the dragon and came

to its dwelling; he found it open, and the treasure buried deep in the earth. There he took also the Helmet of Terror and the golden byrny. He laid the gold in two great chests and set them on the horse Grani, but the horse would not stir until Sigurd mounted it.

For a long time Sigurd rode on, till he came at last to Hindarfiall, and turned southward to the land of the Franks. There he perceived a great light on a mountain, as of burning fire, and the flames shone up to the sky. But as he passed the flame wall, there stood before him a castle covered with shields, and on the battlements hung a banner. Sigurd went into the castle, and saw there a knight who slept all armed. He took off the knight's helmet, and saw that it was a woman. Her coat of mail was so closely fastened on her that it seemed to have grown to her flesh. Then he rent the corselet with his sword Gram, downward from her neck and from both arms. Thereupon she awoke and asked, "What has rent my coat of mail? What has broken my sleep? Who has freed me from my baneful bonds?" When Sigurd told her his name, she blessed the day that had released her from her forced sleep. "Hail to thee, day, and hail to you, ye sons of day! Hail to thee, night, and hail to thee, daughter of night! Look upon us with friendly eyes, and give us victory! Hail to you, ye gods and goddesses, and hail to thee, nourishing earth! Give us wisdom, fair words, and healing hands while we live!" She called herself Sigdrifa (giving victory), and was also named Bryn-

hild, being a maiden warrior in coat of mail (byrny), a valkyrie whose duty was to go to the battle-fields and make choice of those who were to be slain. She arose and said to Sigurd, "I once opposed the will of Odin, and slew in battle a king to whom Odin had promised victory. In vengeance for that deed, Odin thrust the sleep-thorn into me, and said that I never again should have the victory (be Sigdrifa), but should be given away in marriage. I, however, vowed that I would never wed a man who knew of fear. Then Odin enclosed me with a wall of wavering fire, so that only a fearless hero should be able to free me from my sleep." Brynhild taught Sigurd much of her wisdom, and Sigurd exclaimed, "I swear that I will have thee, for thou art as my heart desires." Brynhild replied, "Thee will I have, although I had to choose among all men." And this they pledged to each other by oath.

Afterwards when they met again, Brynhild said, "It is not fated that we should abide together; I am a shield-maiden and wear helmet on head even as the kings of war, and them full often I help, neither is the battle become loathsome to me." Sigurd answered, "What fruit shall be of our life if we live not together? Harder it is to bear this pain than the stroke of the sharp sword." Brynhild replied, "I shall gaze on the host of the war-kings, but thou shalt wed Gudrun, the daughter of Giuki." Sigurd answered, "I swear by the gods that thee will I have for mine own, or no woman else." And so spake she. Sigurd gave her the fatal ring of the dwarf

Andvari, by which she too became mysteriously involved in the consequences of the curse that rested on the possessor of the hoard.

In this connection there is a chapter in the Volunga Saga which describes Sigurd's appearance and array. Although of later origin, a few lines of the chapter are given here to show how the Northmen's imagination represented Sigurd. "His hair was of golden-red hue, fair of fashion and falling down in great locks; . . . so keen were his eyes that few durst gaze at him; his shoulders were as broad to look on as the shoulders of two; . . . and this is the sign told of his height, that when he was girt with the sword Gram . . . the dew-shoe of the sword smote the ears of the standing corn; and for all that greater was his strength than his height. . . . Many-folded was his shield, and blazing with red gold, with the image of a dragon drawn thereon; . . . and with the same image were adorned helmet and saddle and coat-armor; and he was clad in the golden byrny, and all his weapons were gold-wrought."

There was a king called Giuki who ruled a realm south of the Rhine; he had three sons renowned for their warlike deeds. They were named Gunnar (the German Gunther), Högni (the same in *name* as Hagen), and Guttorm. Their sister was called Gudrun (the German Kriemhild), and she was the most beautiful of maidens. Giuki's wife, Gudrun's mother, was well skilled in the art of sorcery.

Gudrun once said to one of her women, "I dreamed that I had a fair hawk on my wrist, feathered with

feathers of gold, and naught was so dear to me as this hawk." The woman replied, "The man thou shalt have will be of the goodliest, and well shalt thou love him." Gudrun answered, "It grieves me that I know not who he shall be; let us go and seek Brynhild, for she will know thereof." When they came to Brynhild, Gudrun said, "I dreamed that we went, many of us, from the bower, and we saw an exceedingly great stag that far excelled all other deer, and his hair was golden; and we were all fain to take the deer, but I alone got him; and he seemed to me better than all things else. But thou, Brynhild, didst shoot and slay my deer even at my very knees; and such grief was that to me that scarce could I bear it; and then afterwards thou gavest me a wolf-cub, which besprinkled me with the blood of my brethren."\* Brynhild answered, "I will explain thy dream, even as things shall come to pass hereafter; for Sigurd shall come to thee, even he whom I have chosen for my well-beloved; and thy mother shall give him mead mingled with hurtful things, which shall cast us all into mighty strife. Him shalt thou have, and him shalt thou quickly miss; and Atli the king shalt thou wed, and thy brothers shalt thou lose, and slay Atli in the end." Gudrun answered, "Grief and woe to know that such things shall be." And then she went home to her father's house.

Sigurd had left Brynhild and taken the hoard with him. He came to Giuki's court, and was well received and held in high esteem by all, for he was the fore-

\* Cf. the dreams in the *Nibelungen Lied*.



most hero of his time. Gudrun's mother perceived how heartily Sigurd loved Brynhild, and how often he spoke of her. Then she fell to thinking how well it would be if he should marry her daughter, for she saw that none could be compared with him, and that he had more wealth than any other man. So, one night as they sat drinking, she arose, went before Sigurd, and gave him the drinking-horn, which contained a draught of forgetfulness. Sigurd drank, and from that time he thought no more of Brynhild; but, seeing how fair and graceful Gudrun was, he married her, and Gunnar, Högni, and Sigurd swore brotherhood together.

One day Gunnar was reminded by his mother that he was still unwedded. "Go and woo Brynhild," she said, "and Sigurd will ride with thee." Gunnar replied, "Fair is she indeed, and fain would I win her."

Then Sigurd, Gunnar, and Högni rode towards the hall enclosed with wavering fire. But Brynhild had vowed to wed him only who would ride the horse Grani and pass through the flame wall, well knowing that none durst do it save Sigurd alone. Gunnar spurred his steed against the fire, but the horse shrank back. Sigurd told him to mount his horse Grani, but the latter would not stir, and so Gunnar could not approach the flames. Thereupon Gunnar and Sigurd changed semblance, and Sigurd in the likeness of Gunnar mounted his horse Grani and leaped into the fire. Then a great roar arose, and the earth trembled and the flames blazed up unto heaven. But as Sigurd

rode through the flame wall the fire sank, and he came to the hall where Brynhild was. Sigurd said, "I am Gunnar, and thou art awarded to me as my wife, since I have ridden through the wavering fire." While Sigurd stood on the floor of the hall and leaned on the hilt of his sword, Brynhild, mindful of the true Sigurd and of her valkyrian prowess, answered sorrowfully, but believed that he had spoken the truth. There Sigurd abode three nights, and they lay on one couch, but he placed his sword Gram between her and him. Afterwards he took from her the ring of the dwarf Andvari and rode back through the flames; then he and Gunnar changed semblance again. Gunnar was wedded to Brynhild, and when the wedding-feast was ended Sigurd remembered his oath with Brynhild, yet the memory of it seemed not to disturb him.

Some time after the marriage of Brynhild the queens went together to the river to bathe. Then Brynhild waded farther out into the stream, and as Gudrun asked her why she did so, Brynhild answered, "Why shall I be equal to thee in this matter more than in others? My husband is greater than thine, and has accomplished many glorious deeds. It is he who rode through the flaming fire." Gudrun replied wrathfully, "Thou wouldst be wiser to be silent. There is none in this world like unto my husband; he was thy first beloved; he slew Fafnir and rode through the wavering flames, he whom thou didst take for Gunnar the king, and from thy hand he took the ring Andvaranaut. Thou mayest

here behold it." When Brynhild saw the ring she waxed pale as if she were dead, went home and spoke no word all the evening. On the next morning, when the queens sat in the bower, the quarrel was renewed, and Brynhild plainly showed her jealousy of Gudrun, as the latter possessed Sigurd. When Gudrun told her that Gunnar was a great king, Brynhild replied, "Sigurd slew Fafnir, and that one deed is worth more than all the might of Gunnar." Afterwards she heaped reproaches on Gunnar because he had deceived her, and threatened to slay him, whereupon Högni put her in fetters, but Gunnar said, "Nay, I will not that she abide in fetters." Brynhild spoke: "Heed it not, for never again shalt thou see me glad in thy hall, never drinking, never at the chess-play, never speaking words of kindness, never overlaying the fair cloths with gold, never giving thee good counsel—ah, my sorrow of heart that I might not have Sigurd for myself!" Then she sat up and smote her needlework and rent it asunder, and bade her bower doors be opened wide, that far away the wailings of her sorrow might be heard. On the following day, when Sigurd came home from hunting, Gudrun asked him with tears to try to abate Brynhild's fury. "Give her gold," she said, "and smother her grief and anger therewith."

When Sigurd came to Brynhild and assured her that a king like Gunnar was worthy of her love, her rage became greater at these words, as they were spoken by the man whom she loved. She said, "This is the sorest sorrow to me, that the bitter sword is not

reddened in thy blood." But afterwards Sigurd exclaimed, "I loved thee better than myself, although I fell into the wiles whence our lives may not escape ; for whensoever my own heart and mind availed me, then I sorrowed sore that thou wert not my wife." Brynhild replied, "Too late thou tellest me that my grief grieveth thee. . . . I swore an oath to wed the man who should ride through the flaming fire, and that oath will I hold, or die." Sigurd said, "Rather than thou shouldst die I will wed thee and put away Gudrun." But Brynhild answered, "I will not have thee nor any other." Thereupon Sigurd left her, and when Gunnar came to her she spoke : "I will not live, for Sigurd has betrayed me, and thee no less ; and this shall be Sigurd's death or thy death or my death, for now he has told Gudrun all, and she is reviling me even now." Gunnar grew angry, and hesitated long as to what he would do. But at last his love for Brynhild, together with his desire to obtain the hoard, made him forget his former friendship with Sigurd, and he agreed to Brynhild's demand, although Högni spoke against the deed and foretold the great sorrow that would follow. Guttorm, their step-brother, who had not sworn the oath of brotherhood, was urged to commit the murder, and they promised him great rewards and honors. Guttorm, excited by magic drinks, went to Sigurd as he lay upon his bed, yet he durst not do aught against him, but shrank back ; and even so he fared a second time, for so bright and eager were the eyes of Sigurd that few durst look upon him. But the third time he went in, and there

lay Sigurd asleep ; then Guttorm drew his sword and thrust Sigurd through in such wise that the sword-point smote into the bed beneath him. Sigurd awoke with that wound, and Guttorm drew back unto the door. Sigurd seized the sword Gram and cast it after him, and it smote him on the back and struck him asunder in the midst, so that his feet fell one way and his head and hands back into the chamber.

Gudrun had been asleep on Sigurd's breast, but she awoke, moaned, and clasped her hands in despair. Sigurd told her: "Behold, this has Brynhild brought to pass, even she who loves me before all men ; but this may I swear, that never have I wrought ill to Gunnar, but rather have ever held fast to my oath with him, nor was I ever too much a friend of his wife. And now, if I had been forewarned and had been afoot with my weapons, then should many a man have lost his life ere I had fallen, and all those brethren should have been slain, and a harder work would the slaying of me have been than the slaying of the mightiest bull or the mightiest boar in the wildwood."

When Brynhild heard Gudrun's loud bewailings she laughed heartily ; yet soon after she began to weep over the very deed to which she had urged her husband, and foretold the woe that was to follow Sigurd's murder. Then she thrust a sword through her side and sank upon the pillows of her couch, while she asked Gunnar as a last boon to have her borne to Sigurd's funeral pyre and a drawn sword placed between her and him, as once in the days

of yore. There she was burned by the side of her first and only love.

Gudrun bewailed Sigurd's death for a long time, while Atli, Brynhild's brother, was wroth with Gunnar and Högni, and accused them of having been the cause of Brynhild's death. Yet they became reconciled, and Gudrun was forced to marry Atli, but she loved him not. A drink of forgetfulness had been given to her, and she remembered no more her brother's guilt against her. At Atli's court dwelt King Tjôdrek (Dietrich von Bern), who had lost most of his vassals. Atli wished to get possession of the hoard which had been seized by Gunnar and Högni after Sigurd's death, and he therefore treacherously invited his brothers-in-law to a great banquet in his castle. In vain Gudrun endeavored to warn her brothers of Atli's designs ; her attempt was frustrated by the perfidy of the messenger who was sent to them, who changed the Runic message in such wise that she seemed to ask them to come and see Atli. Gunnar gave his word to accept Atli's invitation, and he and Högni departed with a small retinue, in spite of the ill-boding dreams of their wives,\* and came to Atli's land. There they beheld the king's army, and heard a huge uproar and the clatter of weapons. The castle gates were shut, but Högni broke them open. Atli said, "Deliver unto me that plenteous gold which is mine of right, even the wealth which Sigurd once owned and which is now Gudrun's of right." At Gunnar's refusal to comply with Atli's demand the

\* p. 95.

two parties fell to hard fighting, and Gudrun took up arms and fought bravely by the side of her brothers against her husband's men. After an heroic struggle all the champions of Gunnar and Högni had fallen, but they two alone stood still undismayed amidst their foes. At last they were overpowered by the great host of warriors that fell on them, and were cast into fetters. Högni's heart was cut out of his body, but he laughed at the torture; and when the heart was shown to Gunnar the latter said to Atli, "Now I alone know where the gold is, nor shall Högni be able to tell thereof. In the rolling waves of the Rhine the valrings\* glitter more than the gold shines on the hands of the Huns." Then Gunnar was thrown into a serpent's den, wherein were many snakes, and his hands were fast bound; but Gudrun sent him a harp, and he played with his toes in such a wonderful wise that all the snakes fell asleep save one adder only, great and evil of aspect, that crept unto him and thrust its sting into him until it smote his heart, and thus he died.

Gudrun did not forget her woe, but brooded over it until she accomplished her thoughts of revenge. While a funeral feast was being held for the slain heroes of both parties, Gudrun killed the two sons she had by Atli, and mingled their blood with the king's wine; afterwards she murdered Atli with the help of Högni's son, called Niblung; and later still she set fire to the hall, to wreak vengeance even on Atli's champions who had aided in the destruction of her kindred.

\* p. 62.

The later destiny of Gudrun, her marriage with Jonakur, and the fate of Swanhild, her daughter by Sigurd, have little bearing on our subject, and will therefore not be considered here.

II. Besides the Northern traditions, of which a sketch has just been given, there is a German work that claims our attention now, as it also throws some light on the Nibelung subject. It is "The Lay of Siegfried with the Horny Skin" (Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfried), which from its versification belongs to the thirteenth century, and from its language to the fifteenth. This work, preserved only in printed editions of the sixteenth century, is an agglomeration of several ancient songs which originally did not belong together, and it contains therefore some contradictions and also different versions of the same event, as, for instance, of the combat with the dragon. At the same time it still shows in its present shape many traces of great antiquity. The poem is divided into three parts, of which the second is the longest and most important.

The first part begins by describing young Siegfried as the impetuous and unmanageable youth who is so well known from the later popular German tales. At the advice of his councillors, King Sigmund let his son have his will, and allowed him to go forth in quest of adventures. Siegfried came to a smithy,\* where he showed his great strength by breaking the iron asunder and striking the anvil into the

\* The story of Siegfried and the smith resembles the account in the Thidrek Saga.



ground. As he did altogether as he pleased, and beat the smith and his men, the former sent him into the forest for coal, hoping that he might be killed there by a dragon who lived near a linden-tree. But Siegfried slew the monster, came then into a wilderness where many snakes and dragons lay, cast trees on them, and set the trees on fire. The horny skin of the monsters melted with the heat, and flowed away like a brook. Siegfried dipped his finger into it, and when it became cold it was horny. Then he rubbed his whole body with it and thus became invulnerable, except at a spot between the shoulders. Afterwards he went to Worms, and served the king in order that the beautiful Princess Kriemhild might be given to him in marriage.

Siegfried went away, and after some time found the Nibelung hoard, which the dwarf Nibelung had left to his three young sons; and on account of the hoard there arose afterwards a most lamentable slaughter among the Huns, in which all were slain save Dietrich von Bern and Hildebrand.

The second part of our poem takes us to Worms, where King Gibich had three sons, named Gunther, Gernot, and Hagen. Once, as Kriemhild, their sister, stood near the castle window, a fiery dragon came flying through the air and carried her off. At Easter he became a man, for by the curse of a woman he had been transformed from a beautiful youth into a dragon; after five years he was to be changed again into his original human shape, and then he meant to marry Kriemhild. The dragon had borne the maiden to

a high rock in the mountains, and tenderly cared for her, while her parents were in despair.

Here begins, as it were, a new representation of the saga, according to which Siegfried does not know his parents, and was sent into a dark forest where he was brought up by a master (smith). As he went out once into the wood to hunt, he happened to meet the track of the dragon and followed it for several days, until at last he arrived at the Drachenstein, yet without being aware of it, for he only thought how he could find his way out of the thick and gloomy forest. At once he perceived a dwarf with a glittering crown on his head, who rode on a coal-black steed. The dwarf, whose name was Eugel, told Siegfried, at his request, who his parents were, and also that a dragon dwelt with the captive princess in the rock. At the same time he warned him to leave the spot at once. Yet Siegfried forced the dwarf to aid him in freeing Kriemhild, whereupon Eugel informed him that a giant, called Kuperan, guarded the entrance to the Drachenstein. A fierce struggle took place between Siegfried and the giant, who, like all giants, bore a pole of steel, four-edged and as sharp as a knife. The giant rushed on the little boy, as he called him, but Siegfried jumped nimbly backward and forward the length of five fathoms at a bound. At last he vanquished Kuperan, who promised to guide him to the dragon's dwelling and procure the maiden for him. Yet, faithless like all giants, Kuperan treacherously attacked Siegfried again, and dealt him such a blow that the blood ran from his mouth

and nose, and he was only rescued by Eugel, who threw the *Nebelkappe*, or the magic cap of darkness (mist), which rendered one invisible, over him. When Siegfried had recovered, he threw away the *Nebelkappe*, and severely wounded the giant, but did not kill him, as Kuperan alone knew the way to the maiden's abode. Then he followed the giant to a steep spot, where he perceived Kriemhild in tears, and also found the sword with which alone the dragon could be vanquished; but while he contemplated the sword, the giant again treacherously assailed and wounded him. Thereupon a struggle for life and death ensued, in which Siegfried tore open the giant's wounds and cast him down from the rock, so that he was dashed to pieces, while the young maiden laughed aloud. But hardly had Siegfried saluted and comforted the royal lady, when a roar was heard, as if the whole mountain were hurled down, and the dragon appeared in the air, casting forth fiery flames, and rushed against the rock, which he caused to tremble. Siegfried drew the sword which Kuperan had shown to him, and attacked the dragon, while the latter vomited fire so that the rock became glowing hot. The dwarfs feared that the mountain might fall and bury them, and thereupon two sons of King Nibelung, who were the brothers of Eugel, had their father's treasure brought out of the bowels of the mountain, and enclosed in a cave under the Drachenstein. After a long and frightful contest, the horny skin of the dragon became soft from the blows that Siegfried dealt it with Kuperan's sword, and at the

same time the heat that issued from the dragon's jaws melted its skin so that at last Siegfried hewed the monster in pieces, and thus the maiden was rescued. The royal brothers informed Siegfried that their father Nibelung had died of grief because Kuperan had vanquished him and subdued his realm. Eugel also disclosed, at Siegfried's request, the latter's future destiny from the stars, and told him that he would live only eight years longer, but his death would be revenged by his wife. Then Eugel thanked him for having delivered him and his people from the power and tyranny of the giant Kuperan. Siegfried seized the hoard, believing that it had belonged to the dragon or to Kuperan, set it on his horse, and departed with Kriemhild. Afterwards, when he came to the Rhine, he thought of his predicted doom and of the consequent uselessness of the treasure, and therefore cast the latter into the river.

In the third part, which contains only a few stanzas, the poet remarks that envy arose in the hearts of the three royal brothers at Worms against Siegfried, as he was the most renowned hero of his time, and that Hagen stabbed him between the shoulders, near a well in the Odenwald. Finally the poet says that whoever wishes to hear more particularly of the events that passed during the eight years \* may read "*Seyfrides Hochzeit*" (Siegfried's Marriage). The latter poem has been lost, but seems to have treated of the sagas which are contained in the first part of our *Nibelungen Lied*.

\* Cf. Eugel's prophecy.

Having glanced at the works already outlined for the purpose of throwing light on the greatest poem of Mediæval Germany, let us now consider the relations that exist between the Northern and German traditions of our saga.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND THE GERMAN NIBELUNG TRADITIONS, AND THE INFLU- ENCE OF HISTORY ON THE SAGA.

#### *The Nibelungs and the Nibelung Land.*

THE word "Nibelung," or in the Icelandic language "Niflung," is related to "Niflheim," the home of mist (Nebel) and gloom, the realm of cold and darkness. In the first part of our Nibelungen Lied, the name belongs to those who appear \* to be the original possessors of the hoard,—to the people slain or conquered by Siegfried,† —and then to the latter himself, together with the vanquished Nibelungs, while the Burgundians are called Nibelungs only after they have obtained the hoard. Thus it seems evident that the name "Nibelung" is attached to the hoard, and through it to its possessors.

In regard to the Nibelung land, Carlyle very poetically says: "Far beyond the firm horizon, that wonder-bearing region swims on the infinite waters, at most discerned as a faint streak hanging in the blue

\* p. 5.

† p. 6.

depths, uncertain, whether island or cloud." We cannot be fully satisfied with this beautiful description, but must see what is meant in our sagas and poems. According to Raszmann, the home of the swarthy elves (Svartalfaheim or Schwarzenheim), where in the Younger Edda Loki took the gold from Andvari, must be identical with the region in Norway where, according to the German epic,\* the Nibelung fortresses are situated. Raszmann says rightly that Norway, i. e. the north-way, denoted the road leading to Niflheim, which was supposed to lie at the extreme north. For when Hermod went to Hel, to offer her a ransom if she would allow Balder to return to Asgard, he rode nine nights through deep and dark valleys, and did not see light until he came to the stream Gjøl, the bridge over which was thatched with shining gold; and he was directed to ride downward and northward to reach Niflhel, or the realm of death. Simrock correctly conjectured that Niflhel is Svartalfaheim, and on the other hand no northern country can convey a better idea of the home of the swarthy elves than Norway with its deep rocky dales.†

*The Acquisition of the Hoard and the Slaying of the Dragon.*

When we compare the different accounts of Siegfried's acquisition of the hoard, we find that they agree in many points. Fafnir and Regin quarrel about their paternal inheritance; so do Schilbung and Nibelung. The two former and the latter are

\* p. 15.      † Raszmann, Deutsche Heldensage, Vol. I.

slain by Siegfried. The deed is done with Siegfried's sword, called Gram in the Northern traditions, and Balmung in the German saga. Schilbung and Nibelung give their father's sword to Siegfried, so that he may divide the hoard between them; on the other hand, Regin forges Sigmund's sword anew, in order that Siegfried may slay Fafnir and procure him the treasure.

The lay of Siegfried seems alone, among the German traditions, to have preserved the idea that the dragon was originally a human being, although the transformation there is not a voluntary one, as in the case of Fafnir, but is caused by the curse of a woman.\* As Fafnir slew his father Hreidmar to obtain the hoard, the giant Kuperan† brought about the death of old King Nibelung, since the latter died from grief at seeing himself and his people vanquished and subdued by Kuperan. Thus in this respect Hreidmar is identical with old King Nibelung, who is only alluded to in the Nibelungen Lied, but distinctly mentioned in the lay of Siegfried, while Fafnir is identical with Kuperan and the dragon; Kuperan also possessed the king's sword Balmung. That in the lay of Siegfried two beings, the dragon and Kuperan, correspond to Fafnir, may be explained, as Raszmann thinks, by the general formation of the saga in that poem, and by the fact that giants were supposed to guard treasures,

\* Yet as transformations of human beings into dragons occur in many sagas, it is not absolutely certain whether the lay of Siegfried has preserved here an ancient characteristic of the Nibelung story, or has been influenced by later traditions of a similar nature.

† p. 80.



as in the *Nibelungen Lied* Siegfried slays twelve giants in the service of Nibelung and Schilbung,\* and again a giant appears as keeper of the hoard and is overcome by Siegfried.† The dwarfs possess a treasure, in the lay of Siegfried, yet they are subject to the giant.

In the Northern traditions Hreidmar and Fafnir are not the first possessors of the hoard; and we can presume that this may also have been the case in regard to old King Nibelung and his sons, especially as the beginning of the fatal consequences of owning the treasure appears already in the fact that Nibelung and Schilbung are slain by Siegfried on account of the hoard, and the latter comes into the possession of Siegfried. Thus old King Nibelung may have obtained the hoard in the same manner as Hreidmar.

In the *Nibelungen Lied* Siegfried slays twelve giants and overcomes the dwarf Alberich; in the Northern accounts he kills Fafnir, primitively a giant, and Regin, a dwarf; while in the song of Siegfried he slays the giant Kuperan after he had forced the dwarf Eugel to submission to his will. Yet giants and dwarfs are not fundamentally different beings in Teutonic mythology, but are of a kindred nature; thus Regin is once called a giant. On the other hand, Germanic saga-lore abounds in tales ascribing pre-eminently to dwarfs the gathering of treasures and the making of costly and powerful weapons; for instance, the dwarf Andvari possesses the hoard, and Regin is well skilled in the craft of a smith; therefore

\* p. 5.

† p. 12.

it is not surprising that the Nibelungs appear in the German sagas, and particularly in the song of Siegfried, at times as dwarfs. The fact that in the latter poem Siegfried strikes the anvil into the ground to show his strength and unmanageable disposition reminds us of his smiting the sword which Regin at first made for him into the anvil so that the sword broke asunder. There is also a striking similarity between the smith, who in the lay of Siegfried sends the latter to the dragon in the forest, and Regin, Fafnir's brother, although neither smith nor dragon is mentioned by his name, nor is it said that they are brothers. Eugel with the Tarnkappe and his dwarfs correspond to Alberich and the Nibelung knights, as they remain faithful to Siegfried after he had overcome them. It must also be mentioned that the hoard has not assumed in the lay of Siegfried such enormous dimensions as in the Nibelungen Lied, where a hundred wagons did not suffice to carry it away, but, on the contrary, Siegfried there sets it on his horse, as he does in the Northern traditions.

We have seen that the lay of Siegfried shows some traces of great antiquity that throw light on our subject, yet on the other hand it must be admitted that this poem exhibits also the influence of later songs and sagas, and contains moreover, as has been indicated above, many stanzas which cannot originally have belonged together in the order in which they are given, since they imply a contradiction or are otherwise unintelligible. Thus Siegfried, towards the end of the second part of the poem, casts the hoard

into the Rhine on account of Eugel's predictions, while the general course of the saga demands that the hoard should be thrown into the river by the royal brothers of Worms or their dependants, and not by Siegfried; moreover, in the first part of our poem it is related that a most lamentable slaughter took place among the Huns on account of the Nibelung treasure, and thus the lay of Siegfried is here in contradiction with itself. Again Siegfried, in the first part of the lay,\* slew a dragon and his skin became horny and invulnerable, yet he is wounded by Kuperan† and only saved by Eugel, who threw the Tarnkappe over him. The idea that the faithlessness of the smith (Regin) was the cause of the slaying of the dragon is forgotten in our lay, and the dragon who kept the maiden imprisoned and the one to whom Siegfried was sent by the smith must primitively have been the same.

The ring Andvaranaut‡ by which the gold could ever be renewed is identical with the wishing-rod in the Nibelungen Lied,§ in so far as by the latter the treasure could always be replaced. The ring is as fatal at the quarrel of the queens in the German epic as Andvaranaut in the Northern sagas. To Siegfried's power of changing semblance || corresponds the Tarnkappe.

In regard to the filling of the otter-skin with gold and covering it over with gold,¶ it must be noticed

\* p. 77.

† p. 78.

‡ p. 61.

§ p. 6.

|| p. 69.

¶ p. 60.

that the most striking characteristic of the earliest Teutonic laws is the payment of money (or the value of money) for crimes and offences, a fact which appears pre-eminently in the old Anglo-Saxon laws. It is also interesting to state that in the Northern countries the skin of a stolen ox had to be filled with flour and given to the injured party; while in old Saxony a dog that had been killed maliciously was hung up by its tail so that its nose touched the ground; then red wheat was poured over the dead dog until the latter was fully covered with it. Dr. E. Koch, who mentions these facts (to be found in Grimm's "Rechtsaltertümer"), remarks that the saga combined the idea of filling and covering over, and changed the red wheat into red gold.\*

Yet while there are many points in which the Northern and German traditions evidently agree, or at least can be reasonably supposed to have primitively agreed, there are other features which seem to show no resemblance. Thus the acquisition of the hoard is not represented in the *Nibelungen Lied* as a consequence of the slaying of the dragon, but the two incidents appear separate and unconnected; or, in other words, the dragon and the possessor of the hoard are one and the same being in the Northern traditions, while in the *Nibelungen Lied* they are different beings and seem altogether unconnected, nor is there anything said about the dragon's former human nature. Raszmann thinks that the change which appears in the German epic was brought about by the fact that

\* Dr. Ernst Koch, *Die Nibelungensage*, p. 20.

a Christian poet at the end of the twelfth century — a time in which the Church was all-powerful — could not include in his work incidents like the transformation of a man, the possessor of the hoard, into a dragon, as it savored too much of paganism, while the cavaliers at Worms and Siegfried appear in the garb of Christian heroes. Raszmann is without doubt correct in his statement; and although there is only a thin veil of superficial Christianity spread over our poem, yet the account of the original acquisition of the hoard as related in the Edda and Volsunga Saga could not find a place in the Mediæval epic. It is true that there are in the poem persons and incidents which remind us of pagan times, like the giants, dwarfs, and mermaids, and their prophecies; yet in the manner in which they appear in our poem they were far less offensive and unintelligible to the Christian sentiment of the age than Odin, Loki, and Hreidmar would have been, and moreover the Mediæval Church freely tolerated a sort of Christian mythology. It is very appropriate that Hagen should relate the tale of the acquisition of the hoard, as he is well acquainted with foreign lands; yet the whole story, by the manner and language in which it is told, bears evidence of later origin. On the other hand, the account of Siegfried's sojourn at the smith's (Regin's) was omitted in our poem, as it was not adapted to the hero's evidently chivalric position, which he holds there from the beginning, and would not have been in accordance with the taste of the higher society of the age.

As has been seen above, the tale of the original acquisition of the hoard is but dimly remembered in the Nibelungen Lied; yet although the hoard lost in the German poem much of its primitive significance, and is no longer the only powerful tragic motive of action, it is not without importance. The curse resting upon the possessor of the fatal treasure appears in several instances, as at the very beginning, in the death of Schilbung and Nibelung, and especially at the end of the epic, when Kriemhild orders Gunther's head to be cut off, and bears it to Hagen to hear from him where the hoard had been concealed.

Most scholars assert that the story of the dragon and of Siegfried's invulnerability, in the form in which it appears, came into the Nibelungen Lied only at a later period and probably from current popular songs; yet the origin of the latter may date back to an early epoch.\* However this may be, we must admit with W. Grimm that by this attribute Siegfried's heroic valor and glory appear somewhat diminished. As Siegfried, the invincible hero, had to die, there arose the idea of the only vulnerable spot between the shoulders, where a linden leaf had fallen, in accordance with the popular belief that the dragon — *Eintrache*, i. e. *Lint-drache* or *Lintwurm* — dwelt under a linden-tree, while the German word is really derived from *lint*, meaning a serpent, as in Old Norse *linne* has the same signification.

In conclusion, we must refer here to the great Anglo-Saxon epic "Beowulf," which was composed

\* See Note 1, p. 291.

during the seventh century and in which the exploits of the hero Beowulf are celebrated. In this connection we may quote the words of the distinguished Anglo-Saxon scholar, B. Thorpe,\* who says: "With respect to this, the oldest heroic poem in any Germanic tongue, my opinion is that it is not an original production of the Anglo-Saxon muse, but a metrical paraphrase of an heroic saga, composed in the South-west of Sweden, in the old common language of the North and probably brought to this country [England] during the sway of the Danish dynasty. It is in this light only that I can view a work evincing a knowledge of Northern localities and persons hardly to be acquired by a native of England in those days of ignorance with regard to remote foreign parts. And what interest could an Anglo-Saxon feel in the valorous feats of his deadly foes, the Northmen, and in the encounter of a Sweo-Gothic hero with a monster in Denmark, or with a fire-drake in his own country? The answer, I think, is obvious, — *none whatever.*" The poem has been found in only one manuscript, believed to be of the tenth century, while some of the incidents, as far as they are historical at all, date back to the beginning of the sixth century. The epic belongs in regard to the language properly to English literature, yet it is of great importance for early German poetry and manners.

The poet, relating the deeds of Sigmund, says that the latter slew a dragon "under the gray rock," and that "the dragon, hot, melted away." It is contrary

\* Preface (p. viii.) to the second edition of his "Beowulf."

to both the German and Northern traditions that Sigmund here appears as slayer of the dragon, and not his son Sigurd, while the fact of the monster being slain "under the gray rock" agrees with the account of the Nibelungen Lied where Siegfried kills the dragon near the mountain.\* It is also in accordance with the lay of Siegfried as far as "the Drachenstein" is concerned,† and with the story in the "Rosengarten," where the dragon is slain "at a rock." The words "the dragon, hot, melted away" remind us of Siegfried's burning the monster in the first part of the lay of Siegfried; or, if the dragon's horny skin was melted by the fire coming from its jaws, as Moritz Heyne understands it in his glossary to "Beowulf,"‡ they agree with the corresponding passage in the second part of the lay of Siegfried.

The leading moral idea which appears pre-eminently in the Northern traditions is the curse that rests on the gold, on the greed for wealth which particularly at that early age was the cause of untold misery and crimes. The power of the German kings at that time was based to a great extent on their treasure, or, in epic language, on their hoard; and both history and saga-lore teach us what cruelty, murder, and treason sprang from the eagerness to keep and increase this source of their might. Among the saga-renowned treasures of antiquity there was, besides the Nibelung hoard, the hoard of the Gothic king Hermanric, which is also referred to in "Beowulf" by the name of

\* p. 19.

† p. 78.

‡ Under *hāt*, adj.



*brosinga mene*; the latter corresponds to *men brisinga*, in *Thrymskvidha*, 12 of the Elder Edda, where it is a necklace of the goddess Freya.\* In this connection we may allude to the fact that in the *Völuspâ* (the vala's prophecy) in the Elder Edda the first murder is ascribed to the gold, and that the gold is called the delight of evil-doers.

*Sigurd's first Meeting with Brynhild.*

Instead of the wavering fire surrounding Brynhild's castle, as related in the Edda and Volsunga Saga, the Nibelungen Lied mentions the games of casting the spear, hurling the stone, and leaping, in which each suitor of Brunhild, queen of Isenland, had to match his skill with hers. The successful competitor she was pledged to marry; all others were doomed to death. It is evident that despite the different aspect of the Northern and German traditions there is a great resemblance between them. As Brynhild vows never to wed a man who knows fear, she will marry, in the German epic, only him who can vanquish her in the three games which correspond to the wavering fire. Again her supernatural strength depends, in the Nibelungen Lied, on her maidenhood, as likewise, in the Northern traditions, she ceases to be valkyrie after her marriage.

*The Dreams and Prophecies.*

At the beginning of the Nibelungen Lied Kriemhild dreams that her love will end in sorrow, and

\* For further information see K. Meyer, *Die Dietrichsage*, etc. p. 34.

thus from the heart of the fair maiden comes the first boding of the unutterable woe of future days. Max Müller, in describing our poem, says correctly: "There is always a mingling of light and shade, — in joy a fear of sorrow, in sorrow a ray of hope, and throughout the whole a silent wondering at this strange world. The key-note of the whole poem of the Nibelunge, as it was written down at the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, is sorrow after joy. This is the fatal spell against which all the heroes are fighting, and fighting in vain. And as Hagen dashes the chaplain into the waves in order to belie the prophecy of the mermaids, but the chaplain rises and Hagen plunges headlong into destruction, so Kriemhild is bargaining and playing with the same inevitable fate, cautiously guarding her young heart against the happiness of love, that she may escape the sorrows of a broken heart." To Kriemhild's dream in the Nibelungen Lied corresponds Gudrun's dream of the fair hawk,\* with the exception of the death of the falcon by the two eagles; yet in the dream related to Brunhild† the place of the falcon is taken by the stag who is slain by Brunhild. It is remarkable that the latter dream foreshadows Siegfried's death in the chase, as told in the Nibelungen Lied and in the Thidrek Saga, thus differing from the account of most of the Northern sagas, where he is murdered in his bed.

Dreams and prophecies form a very striking charac-

\* p. 67.

† p. 68.

teristic of Teutonic mythology, and indeed of that of most nations of antiquity. Among the Germans, as we know from history, women were especially considered to be distinguished by the gift of prophecy, and were on that account held in great honor; thus, for instance, the maiden priestess Velleda exercised a great political influence among the Bructeri through her prophetic power. It is therefore not surprising that dreams and prophecies occur frequently in the Northern Nibelung epics and sagas; and the fact that they are also often met with in the German traditions, in spite of the great transformation of the latter, shows that they must be deeply rooted in our saga.

After having mentioned Kriemhild's dream at the opening of the Nibelungen Lied, it will be sufficient here to merely refer to the other dreams and prophecies, among which the following are the most important: the dream of Queen Ute\* before her sons departed to the land of the Huns, corresponding to the dreams of Gunnar's and Högni's wives;† the prophecies which were communicated to Siegfried by Fafnir,‡ the eagles,§ and Brunhild;|| the warnings that Gudrun sent her brothers by a Runic message;¶ Kriemhild's dreams before Siegfried's departure to the chase; \*\* the prophecies of the mermaids to Hagen;†† and Eugel's foretelling of Siegfried's death. There are also some other prophecies in the Northern sagas,

\* p. 27.

† p. 74.

‡ p. 64.

§ p. 64.

|| p. 66.

¶ p. 74.

\*\* p. 20.

†† p. 28.

which have not been mentioned in the outline given above, as they are of little importance for our purpose.

Raszmann, referring to the prophecy in the Edda and Volsunga Saga, very correctly states that it counterbalances the curse of Andvari, "as against the demoniac sway of the latter it manifests itself as an announcement of the approaching fate, and as a voice of warning through words and dreams ever anew, and the more and more definitely, the nearer the curse draws towards its fulfilment. . . . But all these prophecies cannot in the least check the sway of the curse; on the contrary, every accomplishment of it only calls forth the conviction of an inevitable destiny; and the more vividly and decisively, therefore, the prophecies of the new destruction appear, the more passionately those that are involved in the curse rush into it."

### *The Royal House at Worms.*

When we come to consider that portion of our saga which relates to Gunther and his house, we approach historical ground, although it may be stated here beforehand that the events of the second part of the Nibelungen Lied are chiefly based on history, while those of the first part are the outgrowth of a myth. It is an historical fact, that in the year 437 the Burgundian king Gundicar, or Gundahar, was slain, with his family and thousands of his followers, by the Huns under the Roman general Aëtius. The Burgundians, who belonged to the Teutonic race,

appear first in the country between the Vistula and the Oder; but by the irruption of the Huns, and the subsequent migration of the races, they were driven to the west and south. During the last decades of the fourth century they dwelt on the eastern shore of the Rhine, while in the year 406 they crossed the river, obtained *Germania Prima* from the Romans, and dwelt on both sides of the Rhine, including the region near Worms, Speyer, and Mainz. It is not surprising that an event like the overthrow of Gundicar, the founder of the first Teutonic realm on Roman soil, made a deep impression on the people of his time, and saga lore at once took hold of the subject. After the destructive battle of 437 the Burgundians were transferred to Savoy, where in the year 443 a new Burgundian kingdom was founded under the sceptre of a West-Gothic family, relatives of Gundahar. One of the kings of the new dynasty, whose name was Gundobad, gave to his people, in the beginning of the sixth century, a collection of laws, the well-known "*Lex Burgundionum*," in which he names as his ancestors "Gibica, Godomar, Gislahar, and Gundahar."

Gibica is Gibich, which is the name of the father of the three kings in the Mediæval German epics with the exception of the *Nibelungen Lied*, where he is called Dankrat. One of the most ancient Anglo-Saxon poems, "*The Traveller*," which is, however, little more than a roll of names, like the catalogue in Homer, knows this Burgundian king by the name "Gifca," and mentions him after Attila, king of the

Huns, and Hermanric, king of the Goths (Yormunrek in the Volsunga Saga). Gibich is identical with the northern Giuki, the latter name being derived from an old Saxon form "Giveko," closely related to the Anglo-Saxon "Gifica."

The name "Godomar" occurs neither in the Northern nor in the German saga; instead of it Guthorm appears in the former and Gernot in the latter. The historical Giseler is unknown in the Northern traditions; and as his character was probably little defined in the saga, and he is of no particular influence in the general course of the story, the poet of the Nibelungen Lied was at liberty to form a creation according to his own imagination. Thus the youngest brother of Kriemhild became the most amiable of the three kings and the one most beloved by his sister. He spoke against the murder of Siegfried\* and took no part in the crime, but he was unable to prevent it. A charming episode is made of his sojourn at Bechlaren, and of his betrothal with Rüdiger's daughter;† and again very touching are his appeals to Kriemhild's pity and sisterly love when death threatened him and his friends.‡ Although ever unsuccessful in his attempts to have the right prevail, he is firm, and suffers death rather than consent to surrender Hagen, the faithful liegeman, to the queen's revenge, in order to save his own life. Indeed Giseler's character, although extremely kind and devoted, shows no weakness, and is in this respect very different from that of Gunther, who yields to Brunhild's powerful

\* p. 18.

† p. 31.

‡ p. 39.

will and Hagen's treacherous insinuations, and consents to the murder of Siegfried, his best friend, to whom he owed so much.

The evidence drawn from the Burgundian law, in connection with the historical fact of Gunther's defeat by the Huns, although the latter were not led by Attila in person, permits us to determine, at least approximately, the date of this part of our saga. It seems unquestionable that it cannot have originated before the destruction of the earlier Burgundian realm, nor yet very long after it, since, as we have said before, the Burgundians were transferred to Savoy in the year 443, and their temporary sojourn near the Rhine was soon forgotten. At the same time the saga of the Burgundian kings was blended with the story of Siegfried, which, as we shall see hereafter, is based on a myth, while the whole Nibelung saga must have been known to the North as early as the beginning of the seventh century, as is evident from Anglo-Saxon works and especially from "The Traveller." In this connection we may quote Professor Müllenhoff's remark\* on the beginning of the German heroic sagas: "The heroic age," he says, "forms in the life of a nation the great turning-point, when it enters from its primitive condition into the condition which we name the historical. The so-called 'Migration of the Races' is the German heroic age, and the cradle of our hero-saga."

In the Northern traditions and in the lay of Siegfried, Hagen (Högni) is one of the royal brothers,

\* Zur Geschichte der Nibelunge Nôt.

while in all the German poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he is a relative of the kings, and their most powerful and distinguished vassal. In the Thidrek Saga he is the son of Queen Oda (Ute), who, while asleep, was overpowered by an elf; and Hagen is thus the step-brother of the kings. His descent from a demon is seen in the paleness of his face and in his general spectral appearance. In Waltharius,\* where Gibich, the father of Gunther, appears as king of Frankland and resides in Worms, Hagen is no relation of the royal house, and is said to be of Trojan race, — a statement which is based on the old tradition of the descent of the Franks from Troy. As it was but natural that the heroes of the saga should be placed in the vicinity of the Rhine and of Worms, Troy became, in the Nibelungen Lied, Tronje, which is identical with Tronia, a name found in documents of the ninth century, denoting a place which lies northwest of Strassburg and is now called Kirchheim. Yet while Hagen is by no means an historical personage, he is certainly one of the most interesting and powerful figures in the Nibelungen Lied, and his character, as it appears in our poem, has been sufficiently pointed out in the outline of the latter, given above. In the Northern traditions he (Högni) bears himself nobly throughout; and although he speaks against Siegfried's (Sigurd's) murder, he does not shrink from sharing the responsibility for the deed after it has been done.

Volker did not originally belong to the saga, but

\* See Introduction.



is a creation of later times ; and through him Mediæval German knighthood and court poetry were particularly represented and glorified. He was placed in the poem in the neighborhood of the Rhine, — in Alzey in the Palatinate ; the Lords of Alzey bore a fiddle in their escutcheon, and were commonly called "the Fiddlers."\* Like Volker in the Nibelungen Lied we find in "Gudrun" † Horand, the brave warrior and skilled minstrel ; and in the Edda Gunnar himself plays the harp.‡

In regard to Kriemhild it will suffice here to repeat that in the first part of the Nibelungen Lied she is a pure and noble character, the very type of fair and gentle womanhood, while in the second part her passion to revenge Siegfried's death gradually clouds her lovely appearance, until at last she is seen in a ghastly glare of fiendish grandeur. Her mother is in the German epic a revered queen, while in the Northern traditions she is an ambitious and wily sorceress who by magic drinks compels Siegfried to forget Brunhild and his oaths, and to fall in love with her own daughter. In the Nibelungen Lied, as we have seen, Siegfried's former acquaintance with Brunhild, although not wholly forgotten, has yet lost so much of its primitive significance that there is no need of any magic drink. In fact, as Uhland says, the Christian poets of the Middle Ages had themselves taken a draught of forgetfulness, and they could no longer discern the lofty form of the valkyrie Brunhild, while Kriemhild assumed the

\* Cf. p. 34.

† p. 167.

‡ p. 75.

principal rôle in the German epic. Yet although the sublime character which Brunhild exhibits in the Edda fades away in the Nibelungen Lied, she retains a dark and gloomy power, to which the sinister gorgeousness of her palace in Isenland, built of green marble blocks and with eighty-six dismally frowning turrets, forms a grand tragic background.

The hoard is of great importance in Sigurd's marriage with Gudrun, as he takes it with him to Giuki's court, and it forms a powerful incentive for Gudrun's mother to attach him to the royal house. In the Nibelungen Lied, Siegfried left the hoard under Alberich's care in the Nibelung Land, and it is thus of no significance in the wooing of Kriemhild. As has been said before, the three games correspond to the wavering fire, and the Tarnkappe to the change of semblance, while the combat between Siegfried and Brunhild in the bridal chamber is a product of the imaginative power of the poet. Sigurd's second ride through the flame wall (in the likeness of Gunnar) is described more fully and in more glowing colors than his first ride, as it was the more important of the two and alone had fatal consequences.

*The Quarrel of the Queens, and Siegfried's Death.*

The quarrel of the queens, although brought about in a different manner in the Northern and German accounts, leads to the same result, namely, to Siegfried's death. In both traditions Brunhild provokes the strife and offends Kriemhild by her haughty demeanor, while the latter, carried away by the heat

of her wrath, declares that Siegfried had been Brunhild's first husband. This bold assertion was not supported by anything that Siegfried had told his wife of his relation to Brunhild, yet he had given her the ring (and the girdle), which were at least apparent proofs of the accusation she had hurled against the overbearing queen. Apart from this fault, Siegfried in the *Nibelungen Lied* is without guilt and his murder is a crime, for there is nothing in the poem that clearly indicates his former intimate acquaintance with Brunhild. On the other hand, in the Northern traditions he is guilty, since, although he was forced by magic drinks to forget his love for Brunhild, he deceived her knowingly when he came to her in the likeness of Gunther, took the ring from her, and revealed what had passed to his wife. Brunhild's honor and pride were deeply offended by this deception, and nothing less than Siegfried's death could atone for the insult she had suffered, while moreover her heart was consumed by raging flames of jealousy, as another woman possessed the greatest hero of the time, — the man who had been destined for her and whom she loved. Her grand character appears especially in the conflict between her love of Siegfried and the inevitable necessity to demand satisfaction for the wrong he had inflicted upon her. In the *Nibelungen Lied*, where Siegfried is not destined for Brunhild, the latter's pride seems to be the main motive of action; yet, as Lachmann and Koch have observed, why should Brunhild care so much for Siegfried's vassalage, unless she envies Kriemhild for being Siegfried's wife?

The Younger Edda, the Volsunga Saga, and most of the songs of the Elder Edda relate that Siegfried (Sigurd) was murdered while sleeping in his bed,\* while according to the "Lay of Brynhild" and to the "Second Lay of Gudrun" in the Elder Edda, he was slain without doors. At the end of the "Lay of Brynhild" the collector of the poem wrote a few lines in prose, referring to these different tales of Siegfried's death, and also stating that according to German traditions he was murdered in the wood. Whatever may have been the original version of the saga, the most important point is that in all accounts Siegfried was treacherously slain,—a fact already recognized in the concluding sentence of the prose remarks after the Lay of Brynhild: "But all say with one accord that they betrayed him in their troth, and murdered him as he lay unarm'd and unawares." It is but natural and in accordance with the lofty character of the valkyrian Brunhild, that in the Northern sagas, where she loves Siegfried, she should slay herself after the latter's death. On the other hand, in the Nibelungen Lied, where Brunhild's and Siegfried's relations to each other are different, there appears no reason why she should seek death after her pride and honor had been avenged. Henceforth she sinks into complete insignificance, and, as has been said before, Kriemhild becomes the great heroine of the German epic.

*The Revenge.*

Kriemhild's grief and despair on account of Siegfried's death are depicted with no less glowing colors

\* p. 72.

in the Nibelungen Lied than in the Edda and in the Volsunga Saga. In the latter she becomes reconciled to her brothers, takes their part against Atli (Attila), and slays him. In the German epic she is implacable, sacrifices everything to her all-powerful passion of revenge, marries Attila only in order to bring about the destruction of Siegfried's murderer, and shrinks not from the bloodiest deeds to accomplish her object.

When we come to the second part of the Nibelungen Lied, the historical elements of the saga appear more conspicuously, although the chief historical personages in it are often represented in a manner contrary to authenticated truth. The principal historic characters here are Attila, king of the Huns, and Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, the greatest of the early German conquerors, and renowned in saga-lore by the name of Dietrich von Bern, from his palace at Verona (Bern). Yet, as a matter of fact, Attila and Theodoric cannot have met, since the former died in 453 and the latter was born in 455.

While speaking of Attila, we cannot but briefly refer to the most stirring and momentous event of the times, which is known as the Migration of the Races. The movement began long before the Christian era, when the nomadic hordes of the Huns in Eastern Asia became such terrible foes to the Chinese that the latter built the Great Wall of China to ward off their attacks. Being afterwards defeated by the Chinese, about the year 100 B. C., they fled westward, traversed Central Asia, and in the year 375 of our era,

after crossing the vast plains at the west of the Ural Mountains, conquered the land of the Alans between the Volga and the Don. Together with the Alans they pressed forward and fell upon the Goths. The ancient kingdom of the Goths had been divided about the year 369 into the Visigothic and Ostrogothic realms; the former comprised the country north of the Danube and extended westward to the river Theiss in Hungary, while the latter was situated in Southern Russia between the Don and the Dniester. The Huns attacked first the Ostrogoths under their aged king, Hermanric, who nominally ruled over both the Gothic nations. The Ostrogoths were vanquished, and forced to submission; Hermanric in despair killing himself with his own sword.

Then they fell upon the Visigoths, who gave way before the irresistible power of the invaders, and were driven westward. The greater part of the Visigoths crossed the Danube, entered the Eastern Empire, and settled in the country between the Lower Danube and the Hellespont, after a treaty had been concluded between them and the Emperor Valens. On account of the ill treatment they suffered from the treacherous Roman officers, the Visigoths arose in arms against Valens, and defeated him in the great battle of Adrianople in the year 378. Later, in 402, they conquered Italy under their great king, Alaric; but ten years afterwards they passed through Southern Gaul into Spain, and founded a kingdom with the capital at Toulouse. Their king, Theodoric I., fell in the famous battle in which Attila was defeated, upon the

far-stretching plains on the Marne, Aube, and Seine, between Troyes and Chalons, in the year 451; and no small share in the honor of the victory was due to the valor of the Visigoths. In this memorable struggle, which decided the fate of Europe, Attila had, besides his Huns, the Ostrogoths, Thuringians, Burgundians, Franks, and many other German tribes, while the Roman Aëtius with the legions in Gaul was supported by the Visigoths and bands of Franks, Saxons, and Burgundians. Thus Germans fought against Germans; and so fierce was the combat that a brook which crossed the field streamed with the blood of the slain, and yet the exhausted warriors quenched their thirst from the gory waves. We are vividly reminded of this report by Hagen's terrible advice in the *Nibelungen Lied* to drink the blood of the slain.\* The fame of the great painter, Kaulbach, was particularly founded on his grand historical fresco in Berlin, representing the battle of the Huns.

After Attila's death, in the year 453, all the German tribes that had submitted to the yoke of the Huns regained their freedom, while the far-stretching realm of the Asiatic conqueror sank speedily into nothingness, from which it had so suddenly arisen. Yet, short as was the sway of Attila (from 434 to 453), the terror it had inspired, and the great commotion it had brought over the whole Teuton and Roman world, were not so soon forgotten. The people remembered with awe that there was a time when the scales in the hand of Fate trembled, and the momentous

\* p. 40.

question was not whether the vigorous Teutons should wrest the sceptre from proud and effeminate Rome, or whether the stratagems and subtle diplomacy of the latter could stay the inroads of the German tribes, but whether the civilization of the world should be submerged in the dark and bottomless sea of the Hunnish invasion. Thus the memory of the great chieftain hovered for a long time, like a bloody phantom, in the Roman annals and in the German sagas.

Jornandes, who wrote "*De rebus geticis*" about the year 552, mentions, on the authority of Priscus, that Attila died suddenly on his bridal night with Ildico. The latter name is a diminutive of Hilde, which is an abbreviation of a word compounded with *hild*, like Brunhild or Kriemhild. Although in the whole account given by Jornandes there is no trace of a suspicion of the maiden's guilt, it is not surprising that popular opinion soon attributed the sudden death of the powerful conqueror to his bride. Indeed C  mes Marcellinus, who lived about the same time as Jornandes, records as an historical fact that Attila met his death at night from the hand of a woman. This report was widely spread, and became known to the Northern people, who readily believed it, and in their saga made the murderess of Attila commit the deed in order to avenge her brothers, as this was a duty to which she was bound according to the Northern customs. On account of the pre-eminent position which Attila occupied in the minds of men, it is but natural that the overthrow of Gunther's Burgundian kingdom by the Huns should be ascribed directly to



him, although historically Attila himself had taken no part in it. On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that in ancient times the rich king was also the mighty one, and the power of the early warrior kings over their dependants and against their foes derived one of its chief resources from their treasure. Thus the latter became the emblem of the royal power, and, as Müllenhoff remarks, "since every prince as such has a treasure, which is the nerve of his might, hoard and realm (*hord* and *riçe*, *Beowulf*, 4734) are inseparable ideas." Again Müllenhoff argues very correctly when he says: "If therefore Attila coveted Gunnar's realm, it means in epic language that he wished to possess his hoard; and if he despoiled him and his race entirely of their realm, he despoiled them also of their hoard." At the same time, since Attila (Atli) appeared as the conqueror of Gunnar, he could but assume in the saga the part of the avenger of Sigurd, although it is true that Atli's main purpose was to obtain Gunnar's hoard, i. e. his realm, and he would have acted as he did even if he had not been married to Gudrun. The Northern traditions in so far as they attribute Attila's death to his wife are in accordance, if not with the records of strictly historical truth, at least with the popular opinions that prevailed soon after he died, and we must therefore conclude that they represent the earlier formation of this part of the saga. The particular features of the revenge were to a great extent based on an older tradition found in the beginning of the *Volsunga Saga*, and especially in the eighth chapter, which

treats of the vengeance that Signy wreaked on her husband for the death of her father and her brothers.

When we compare the historical Attila, before whose piercing glance Rome and Constantinople trembled, with Etzel of the *Nibelungen Lied*, we find that the latter bears but a slight resemblance to the former. It is true that Attila's powerful sway is still reflected in the *Nibelungen Lied*, as Kriemhild at her arrival in the land of the Huns is surprised at seeing so many nations submitted to his sceptre.\* Yet upon the whole Etzel plays in the German epic the part of a weak and sometimes even contemptible king, while glimpses of his real might can be detected only at rare intervals, fluttering as it were in the far-distant background of a by-gone time. Although the residence of the Mongol chieftain between the Theiss and the Danube, near the Carpathian Mountains, consisted only of wooden structures, they showed, by the immense spoils that were piled up there, and by the presence of embassies from all parts of the world, that Attila's power extended from the Volga to the Rhine, from the Danube to the Vistula and the Elbe, and that his mighty hand reached out even to Constantinople, Africa, and the Euphrates.

It cannot be denied that much of this external splendor of Attila's court is still seen in the *Nibelungen Lied*, while on the other hand it is but natural that Atli, as well as Giuki and Gunnar in the Northern traditions, should appear merely as kings of tribes or chiefs of clans. The *Eddas* and the *Volsunga Saga*

\* p. 26.

bear the impress of the early Teutonic era, when the king was little more than the chosen leader in war; and the Northern people for a long time had in their political institutions nothing by which the conception of a great monarchy, or still less of a far-stretching realm like that of Attila, could be expressed.

Let us now leave the Huns, whose habit was to live more on horseback than on the ground, who shot their bone-pointed arrows and whirled their slings with terrific force and speed as they rode, and who by their repulsive sight, their flat noses, and small, treacherous, and fierce eyes, filled their foes with as much disgust as fear. Together with his hordes we also leave Attila, "the scourge of God," who bore upon his countenance the indelible stamp of his race, and whose sole aim, like that of most Asiatic conquerors, was destruction. As we have spoken of Gunther and the overthrow of the Burgundians,\* we may now turn to another grand personage in our poem, whose picture is far more refreshing and inspiring, both in history and saga-lore, than that of Attila. This is the Ostrogoth, Theodoric the Great (born 455, died 526), renowned in German sagas by the name of Dietrich von Bern.

It has been mentioned that after Attila's death the German tribes that had obeyed his rule became again independent. The Ostrogoths dwelt then in Pannonia in the plains of the Danube, whence they often, under the leadership of the three brothers Walamir, Theodemir, and Widimir, made incursions into the

Eastern Empire. Theodoric, the son of Theodemir and a descendant of the noble house of the Amali, was brought up as a hostage in the court of Constantinople; and while he distinguished himself in early manhood by heroic deeds, he acquired at the same time the art of government, and perceived what power he could wield by the valor of his Goths.

Soon after the overthrow of the Western Empire by Odoacer in the year 476, Theodoric was chosen king by his people, and later, at the instigation of the emperor at Constantinople, he set out to conquer Italy, nominally as the viceroy of the Eastern potentate, but really in entire independence of the latter. After a stubborn contest, in which again Germans fought against Germans, Theodoric, aided by Visigoths from Gaul, at last vanquished Odoacer and took his stronghold, Ravenna, in the year 493. The chief object of Theodoric as ruler of Italy was to permeate the decaying institutions of Rome with the new life that came from the vigorous spirit of his race, and to unite the two nations into one. Although prosperity prevailed again in Italy, and the arts were revived so that even the Roman people called the period of his reign, from 489 to 526, a golden time, he failed in his endeavor to blend the population of Italy, chiefly because the Goths were Arians and the Italians Catholics. Another of Theodoric's great aims was to unite all the German tribes into one national league; yet this plan was impracticable for the time, and was frustrated by the rising power of the Franks. Nevertheless all the Germans looked proudly up to

him as the noblest and mightiest of their great kings, and the glory of his name spread far and wide in songs and tales. Although Theodoric resided generally at Ravenna, where he died and was buried, he stayed at times with his court at Verona, and is therefore called in the saga Dietrich von Bern (Verona), especially as the latter city was better known to the Germans than Ravenna. His castle at Verona was situated in the old town on the left bank of the Adige, on the eminence where now the citadel stands. The great empire founded by Theodoric was destined to come to an end soon after his death, when the Emperor Justinian determined to recover his rights as sovereign of Italy ; in the war that followed, Belisarius and Narses, the famous generals of Justinian, defeated and exterminated the Ostrogoths.

We have already referred to the anachronism in the saga, where Theodoric, who was born in 455, and Attila, who died in 453, appear as contemporaries. Yet even apart from this fact there are not many instances in which an historical personage assumes upon the whole such a radically different character in the popular traditions as Dietrich does in the Nibelungen Lied and indeed in his whole saga-cycle. As no great poem like the Nibelungen Lied has grown out of the traditions of Dietrich, it will be sufficient in this place to indicate how a king who, according to history, was almost always victorious, appears in the saga as an exile enjoying the hospitality of Attila. This discrepancy between history and tradition can be explained when we assume that Dietrich repre-

sents in the latter not so much his own glorious career as the destiny of his people. His somewhat subordinate position at Attila's court denotes the submission to which his race had been forced by the Huns, while the destruction of the Ostrogothic Empire in Italy, although it happened after Theodoric's death, is reflected in the saga in the defeat and fall of his heroes.\* From the fact that Dietrich, according to tradition, sojourned at Attila's court, it was natural that he should be drawn into the contest which is depicted in the second part of the *Nibelungen Lied*.

Since Dietrich is the historical Theodoric, he cannot from the beginning have had a place in the saga, as it began to be formed soon after the destruction of the Burgundian realm in the year 437. But when the great king became connected with the then fluctuating tradition, he could not play a secondary part in it, and thus the last struggles in the bloody conflict were decided by his powerful arm. As Dietrich came to hold such a prominent position, Etzel was thrust into the background, and consequently Kriemhild became the central figure of action. At the same time the defeat of the Burgundians began to be considered in Germany as a just retribution for their murder of Siegfried, and naturally Kriemhild took the part of the avenger, as she, and not Etzel, had been offended. This formation of the last part of the saga was also fully in accordance with the demands of poetic unity and consistency of action.†

\* W. Müller in Henneberger's *Jahrbuch*, I. 168.

† See Note 2, p. 292.

While the phase of the saga in which Kriemhild revenges the death of her husband on her brothers must date back to an early epoch, the oldest evidence which we possess of this transformation is found not a long time before the composition of the *Nibelungen Lied* in its present shape. Combining the report of Saxo Grammaticus and the anonymous "*Vita Canuti*" (edited by Waitz, 1858), we find that the Danish king Magnus, plotting against the life of Duke Kanut of Schleswig, invited him to an interview. The king's messenger was a Saxon minstrel, who knew of the plot, but had taken an oath not to betray the secret. While Kanut rode with him to meet Magnus, the minstrel was moved with compassion at the impending fate of the duke; yet, as he would not break his oath, he warned him by repeating several times a song which treated of Kriemhild's perfidy towards her brothers. The duke was regardless of the warning, and met his death on the seventh day of January, 1131. It is evident from this account that the saga then contained the story of the revenge as it is related in the *Nibelungen Lied*; and although the scene of the events is in Denmark, the chief motive of action is not the treachery of Attila, as in the Northern traditions, but the perfidy of his wife, as in the *Nibelungen Lied*, and her name is not Gudrun, but Kriemhild. Yet at the same time it must be borne in mind that the song was recited by a Saxon and not by a Northman.

Of the more important personages in our poem who have not yet been referred to in this section,

we may mention the Margrave Rüdiger of Bechlaren, who forms, from a poetic point of view, one of the finest pictures in our epic.\* Although Rüdiger is represented in the *Nibelungen Lied* in the garb of an historical personage, he belongs by no means to history. He may be a mere product of poetic imagination or entirely a mythical figure. The latter opinion is held by R. von Muth in his interesting essay entitled "*Der Mythos vom Markgrafen Rüdiger*." In conclusion, we may state that Bishop Pilgrim of Passau, who appears in the *Nibelungen Lied* as a brother of Queen Ute, is an historical person who died in the year 991. His connection with our epic is a striking anachronism, and was brought about by another poem, "*Die Klage*" (The Lament), to which we shall refer hereafter.†

\* p. 41.

† p. 130.



## CHAPTER V.

I. THE MYTHICAL ELEMENTS OF THE NIBELUNG STORY AND THEIR COMBINATION WITH THE SAGA AND HISTORY.—II. THE LAMENT.—III. THE MANUSCRIPTS AND THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE NIBELUNGEN LIED.—IV. THE METRE.—V. TRANSLATIONS.—VI. GEIBEL'S BRUNHILD.

I. WHEN we draw back the thin veil of superficial Christianity which is spread over the Nibelungen Lied in the form in which it has been transmitted to us; when we look beyond the surface, and unroll the records of the ancient sagas and poems containing the early Nibelung stories,—there arises, as we have seen, a grand picture before our eyes. We can now perceive more clearly than it would have been possible from the Nibelungen Lied alone, that there are two prominent elements in our saga, the mythical and the historical, and that only by the combination of both a true national saga can be produced. Thus the Nibelung story consists of two parts, which primitively had no connection with each other: the first part, the story of Siegfried, is the outgrowth of a myth;

the second, the destruction of the Burgundians by the Huns, is chiefly based on history. All endeavors to explain the Nibelung saga in a purely mythical or a purely historical sense have necessarily been in vain. As it was evident that the overthrow of the royal house at Worms was founded on an historical event, attempts were made to prove also an historical Siegfried. Thus some tried to identify Siegfried with the Rhine-Frank Sigibert who was assassinated on the chase in a forest near Fulda at the beginning of the sixth century. The deed was done at the instigation of his son, who coveted the power and the treasures of his father. Others endeavored to show Siegfried's identity with Sigibert, the husband of Brunehaut (Brunichild), who was murdered in the war against his brother Chilperic by the contrivance of the latter's wife, Fredegonde, in the year 575. Yet the mere similarity of their death with that of Siegfried is far from proving any identity between them and the hero of our saga, as neither of the former shows any resemblance to the essential characteristics of Siegfried, nor is there any personage in early German history that can be compared with him. He is neither Claudius Civilis nor Arminius, and still less is the combat between the two hostile families in the saga a picture of the historical strife between the Guelfs and Ghibellines. Whatever influence history exerted on the Nibelung traditions has been sufficiently indicated above, and thus the following pages will refer chiefly to the mythical aspect of our saga.

The Siegfried myth denotes the struggle between light and darkness, day and night, summer and winter. The dragon is the thunder-cloud, which at night, when the sky is furrowed by lightnings, seemed to the early race of men like a fantastic being shrouded in flames; and this circumstance may have suggested the idea of a golden treasure guarded by the dark monster. The sun myth also represented the death of the day at sunset, when the sky is as radiant as if dyed in blood. Again the dragon is the winter, which is vanquished by the beautiful and mighty god of summer and of the bright daylight; but the latter's triumph is of short duration, and he is in his turn conquered by the powers of darkness and cold which he had formerly overcome.

This same primitive idea which forms the foundation of the Nibelung myths is found at a time anterior even to the earliest period of Teutonic antiquity, at a time when Central Asia was still the common home of the whole Indo-European race. In their original form these myths were the expression of a people who in childlike simplicity gazed upon the wonders of nature, and personified, eulogized, and magnified the powers of the universe which they could not comprehend. Above all, it was this struggle between light and darkness which attracted their wondering glance, and which in later times was transformed into an heroic saga interwoven with the accounts of some historical events, whether represented by the heroes of the Mahâbhârata or by those of Firdusi's Schâhnameh; or by the clash of arms before the gates

of Troy ; or by Siegfried, the sun-youth, before whose bright and piercing glance the murderer Guttorm trembled,\* and the Nibelungs, the powers of the misty dark.† But as the epics of the Hindus, Persians, and Greeks have widely departed from their pure source by the impress of various epochs of culture, the early Teutonic traditions, and particularly the Nibelung sagas, have for the same reason undergone manifold changes.

There are two Teutonic myths which throw light on the Siegfried story ; these are the myth of Balder and the myth of Frey. Balder, the son of Odin and Frigg, was the god of the summer sunlight, the beloved of gods and men. He was so fair and dazzling in form and features, that rays of light seemed to issue from him. His dwelling was called Breidablick (the broad-shining splendor), where nothing unclean could enter. The Younger Edda‡ relates that he was tormented by dreams which foreboded danger to his life. Thereupon the gods held counsel together, and his mother Frigg exacted an oath from fire, water, iron, and all kinds of metal, stones, earth, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds, and creeping things, that they should not hurt Balder. Then it became the pastime of Balder and the gods that he should stand up at their assemblies, while some of them would shoot at him, others would hew at him ; but

\* p. 72.

† p. 82.

‡ R. B. Anderson's Younger Edda, p. 130 ; see also the same author's Norse Mythology, pp. 279-297.

whatever they did, no harm came to him. When Loki saw this, it displeased him very much that Balder was not scathed. So by cunning he learned from Frigg, to whom he had gone in the likeness of a woman, that no oath had been exacted from the mistletoe, as it seemed too young. Loki pulled up the mistletoe, and went to the assembly. There Balder's blind brother Hodir (darkness) stood aside from the others, but Loki placed the mistletoe in his hand, and treacherously told him to shoot at Balder. Hodir was of tremendous strength,\* and without malice discharged the fatal dart at Balder, who was pierced by it and fell dead to the ground. The gods were struck speechless with horror, but Odin took this misfortune most to heart, since he best comprehended how great a loss and injury the fall of the beautiful god was to all of them. His corpse was taken to the ship Hringhorn in order to be burned there; and as his wife Nanna beheld this, she died of grief, and was burned on the funeral pyre at the side of her husband.

Balder's death was the sign of the approaching destruction of the gods and of the world through the powers of evil and darkness, when the Fenris-wolf swallows Odin, and the heavens are rent in twain. Thus the idea of the struggle between the powers of nature, as seen in the seasons of the year, is here transferred to the mythical world-year. The *Völuspâ* (the vala's prophecy) in the Elder Edda gives a very fine description of this destruction of the world, called in the Norse language "Ragnarok," and in the Ger-

\* Younger Edda, "The Fooling of Gylfe," 28.

man, *Götterdämmerung*, literally, "the twilight of the gods." There is a beautiful chapter on the Ragnarok in Anderson's Norse Mythology. The overthrow of the Nibelungs (Burgundians) at Attila's court cannot be brought in connection with the Ragnarok, as the second part of the *Nibelungen Lied* is mainly based on history. Balder is, as has been said before, the god of summer, of the summer sunlight which rejoices all beings. He cannot be hurt by any weapon; only the mistletoe, which needs so little the warm sun that its fruit ripens in winter, and which grows on trees, not upon the earth, can harm him. The myth denotes the disappearance of the bright summer and the approach of winter with its dark and long nights.

In this connection we may quote Max Müller's remarks on the myth of Balder. He says: "The idea of a young hero, whether he is called Balder, Siegfried, Sigurd, or Achilles, dying in the fulness of youth, — a story so frequently told, localized, individualized, — was first suggested by the sun dying in all his youthful vigor, either at the end of the day, conquered by the powers of darkness, or at the end of a season, stung by the thorn of winter. Again, that fatal spell, by which these sunny heroes must leave their first love, become unfaithful to her or she to them, was borrowed from nature. The fate of these solar heroes was inevitable, and it was their lot to die by the hand or by the unwilling treachery of their nearest friends or relations. The Sun forsakes the Dawn, and dies at the end of the day according

to an inexorable fate, and bewailed by the whole of nature. Or the sun is the Sun of Spring, who woos the Earth, and then forsakes his bride and grows cold, and is killed at last by the thorn of Winter."

Besides the story of Balder we must consult the myth of Frey, to be found chiefly in the Edda song of Skirnir (the journey of Skirnir) and also in the Younger Edda. Frey was the god of fertility, of rain and sunshine; his chariot was drawn by a boar called Gullinbursti, whose *golden bristles* lighted up the day like night. The god once gazed down from Odin's seat upon the worlds, and beheld in the North at Jotunheim (the home of the giants) the maiden Gerd, who was of such wonderful beauty that both the sky and the sea glistened from the radiance of her white arms. Frey was filled with ardent love for her; but her father, the giant Gymer, guarded her in his dwelling, surrounded by wavering fire and furious dogs. The god's messenger was called Skirnir (the bright one); he was sent for, and Frey asked him to bring the maiden to him. Skirnir declared himself ready to go if Frey would give him his horse to cross the flames, and his sword which would put itself in motion against the giants. Frey gave him the horse and the enchanted sword; this is the reason why he found himself unarmed when he fought with Beli (Gerd's brother) and slew him with a hart's horn. Yet he found himself in a terrible plight when at the Ragnarok he faced Surt (swart) in single combat, and then he sorely missed his trusty blade. Skirner overcame all obstacles on Frey's steed; the whole of

Jotunheim trembled under its hoofs, and he penetrated to Gerd's dwelling, where, after much resistance on the part of the maiden, he obtained in the end her promise that after nine nights she would marry Frey.

Frey is the sun-god ; the boar with golden bristles is the symbol of the sun. Skirnir represents the god who himself in an older form of the myth undertook the journey. He freed the maiden from the powers of darkness by slaying the monster that guarded her and by crossing the flame wall which surrounded her. Gerd is the earth held in bonds by the frost giants, that is, by snow and ice in winter. The god's sword is the sunbeam, which he surrenders to obtain the possession of Gerd ; or, in other words, the glowing sun penetrates the earth and frees it from the power of the frost giants. Beli (the barker) and the furious dogs are the roaring storms. The wavering fire surrounding Gerd's dwelling (and Brynhild's castle) denotes the burning funeral pyre, as J. Grimm has shown ; the earth in winter is, as it were, lifeless, and therefore belongs to the funeral pyre and thus to the powers of the lower world. It was customary to intertwine the funeral pyre with thorns and to light it with a thorn ; we see now what is meant when Odin pricks Brynhild with the sleep-thorn and she falls into death-like sleep. A relic of the myth appears in the charming fairy story of the "Sleeping Beauty" (Dornröschen). It is remarkable that the name of the infernal river *Πυριφλεγέθων* has the same meaning as the wavering fire ;



the way to the lower world leads through the glowing funeral pyre.\*

In comparing the myth of Frey with the Northern Sigurd saga, we find that they agree substantially in some of the most important incidents, and that the slaying of the dragon and the ride through the flame wall are but different expressions of the same mythical idea.† Sigurd is identical with Frey and Skirnir, and Brynhild with Gerd. As has been said above, in an earlier version of the myth Frey undertakes the journey to Jotunheim, and he thus corresponds to Sigurd, who first frees Brynhild for himself. Afterwards Sigurd, coming to Brynhild in the likeness of Gunnar, is identical with Skirnir, who wooes the maiden for his master. Yet the myth of Frey explains only the first part of the Sigurd story, while the second part of the latter, Sigurd's death, finds its explanation in the myth of Balder. The death of Balder is foreshadowed by his ill-boding dreams, with which we may compare Kriemhild's dream in the *Nibelungen Lied*, where Siegfried appears to her as a falcon, whose form only the gods were wont to assume, while the eagles represent the winter giants. The myth of Frey and that of Balder are nearly related to each other; only, as Karl Steiger correctly says, "the arrangement and the conclusion are different: in the one the main thought is, as it were, 'joy after sorrow'; in the other, 'sorrow after joy.' The tale of Balder begins with the complete sway of light;

\* Die Nibelungensage von Dr. E. Koch, pp. 66, 67.

† R. von Muth, p. 61.

and leads us from victory and glory to lamentation and death; on the other hand, the myth of Frey begins with the sway of the dark powers, and leads through strife to the final victory of the god and to his marriage." \* It is very probable that a myth combining the chief incidents of the stories of Frey and Balder was originally ascribed to Odin, and thus the Nibelung saga would be founded on a myth of the chief of the Teutonic gods, Siegfried being identical with Odin. R. von Muth has treated the question in a very interesting manner in his "Einleitung in das Nibelungen Lied," on pages 68, 69, and 70. The myths at first gave expression only to the wonderful phenomena of nature, which were afterwards personified and endowed with human thoughts and feelings. While they were thus interpreted in an ethical sense, and the principle of good and evil was introduced in the Nibelung sagas and epics, a powerful motive was furnished for the composition of a grand tragedy. What has been said on the preceding pages will be sufficient to show the original purport of the myths, and the general resemblance between the latter and the saga. The relation between the two, so far as details and intricate points are concerned, has been zealously investigated and much discussed by prominent German scholars, but no certain conclusions of an absolutely scientific value have as yet been gained.

We may now repeat the principal points shown

\* Die verschiedenen Gestaltungen der Siegfriedsage, etc., von Karl Steiger, p. 40.

on the preceding pages, and see how the composition of the Nibelungen Lied took place. It has been said above that the Nibelung saga consists of two parts, which at first were not connected with each other; the first part, the story of Siegfried, is based on a myth, while the second part, the destruction of the Burgundians by the Huns, is mainly founded on historical events. It has also been indicated that the myth originally denoted the struggle between light and darkness, day and night, summer and winter, and that later the powers of nature were personified, and thus the principle of good and evil was introduced. The myth became then changed into a hero-saga, and was combined and blended with the saga of the Burgundians, whose king Gundicar was slain, with thousands of his followers, by the Huns under the Roman general Aëtius in the year 437. This combination was brought about by the Franks, which is apparent from the fact that the earliest evidences of the name "Nibelung" as an historical appellation are Frankish. The Burgundian kings are called *Franci Nebulones* in Waltharius, and *Rhine-Franks* in Biterolf and in the Lament; moreover the word "Nibelung" (*Nivelongus* or *Nivelo*) occurs as an historical name of Frankish princes in documents of the eighth and ninth centuries. It has been pointed out before that the Northern traditions attributing Attila's death to his wife are in accordance, if not with strictly historical truth, at least with the popular opinions that prevailed soon after he died. In Germany the events which took place from the

year 437 to about the middle of the sixth century were transformed into sagas, and then combined and blended, while the introduction of Dietrich in this fluctuating tradition, and probably also the destruction of the second Burgundian realm by the Franks, together with the demands of poetic unity and consistency of action, brought about such a formation of the Nibelung story as appears in the second part of our epic. The transformation and blending of the different saga-cycles were particularly favored by the decay of paganism in Germany, as those songs which contained a mythological element were gradually deprived of their mythic garb and easily blended with the saga-lore, whose foundation lay in historical events. The Nibelung saga was known in the North as early as the beginning of the seventh century, as is proved by Anglo-Saxon works and especially by the "Traveller." In Germany the story was written down in Latin by Konrad, the scribe of Pilgrim of Passau (971-991). The old epic songs which form the foundation of the saga were revived in a new form, and attained great celebrity during the famous epoch of the Hungarian wars under Henry III. (1039-1056), and again at the beginning of the glorious era of the Hohenstaufen emperors, when during the crusades German chivalry became acquainted with the wonders of the East. The Nibelungen Lied in the form in which it has been transmitted to us existed about the year 1200 (ten years after the death of Frederick Barbarossa), as is seen from an allusion to our poem in the eighth book of Wolfram's "Parzival."

The Nibelung saga has never perished, but, having passed through new transformations by the impress of various epochs of culture, it lives even at the present day in songs and popular tales. As we have already alluded to the fact that on the isles of Faroe the Nibelung story is still in the hearts and on the lips of its inhabitants, we may now mention that some of the transformations of the saga are very curious, and show how in the course of time it can be changed, after the true understanding of its primitive meaning has been lost. Thus in the chronicle of the Danish island of Hven the murderer Hagen, who is taken for a member of a native family, is portrayed as a noble and lofty-minded hero, while Siegfried, supposed to have been a foreigner, appears there as a weak and faithless character. The people among whom a saga was developed naturally took the part of their national heroes, or of those whom they imagined to be of their own race. This national or political partiality is also seen in the Nibelungen Lied in the combat with the Bavarians.

As the words which were spoken three thousand years ago by the singers of the Veda hymns on the shores of the Indus and Ganges are still alive in various forms in different languages, so the Nibelung saga still exists in a great number of fairy tales, although in a form very different from the original. Reference has been made to the well-known favorite of German folk-lore, "The Sleeping Beauty," who is no other than the sleeping Brynhild surrounded by the wavering fire. The primitive meaning of the

sleep-thorn had become unintelligible, and in the fairy story was changed to a spindle. Many legends of the Christian Church are also derived from the Nibelung saga. Thus St. George slaying the dragon is Siegfried in another form.

II. The manuscripts of the Nibelungen Lied contain also a poem, called from its contents "Die Klage" (The Lament), which belongs to the class of court epics.\* The heroes who had escaped the slaughter at Attila's court bewail the death of their friends and kindred. At the same time their deeds are again related and eulogized. Dietrich, beholding Kriemhild's corpse, breaks out in praises of the great beauty of the unfortunate queen, while Etzel is nearly madened with grief. Brunhild receives at Worms the mournful tidings of Kriemhild's dread revenge, and Queen Ute dies soon after, broken-hearted. The poem has very little value from an artistic point of view, but it is important as it tells at the end that Bishop Pilgrim of Passau (971-991) caused the Nibelung story to be written down in Latin by his scribe Konrad.† The author of the Lament knew some songs that have been lost to us, yet he did not know the first part of our Nibelungen Lied.

III. Our epic enjoyed at first very great popularity, and was widely known during the thirteenth century; but with the decline of the empire and the degeneration of chivalry in the fourteenth century, the interest in this great national treasure began to diminish, and at the end of the fifteenth century it

\* See Introduction.

† Cf. Pilgrim on p. 116.

had fallen into almost complete oblivion. Thus, while Parzival and Titurel and some inferior poems of the German hero-saga were among the first works that were printed, the Nibelungen Lied was doomed to remain in obscurity. The noble emperor Maximilian I. (1493–1519) who is still remembered in Germany as “der letzte Ritter,” was also the last who took a lively interest in our poem. The beautiful and costly parchment manuscript *d*,\* which is at the same time the only one containing the text of Gudrun and Biterolf, was written at his order. The historians of the sixteenth century, as Wolfgang Lazius (1514–1565), Caspar Bruschius (1518–1559), and a few others, were still acquainted with the Nibelungen Lied, yet they lacked the right understanding of it, and treated it chiefly as an historical work, describing, as they thought, the wars of the Germans in the tenth century. In this place we may also refer to the tragedy of the famous mastersinger Hans Sachs, “Der Hoernen Seyfried,” of the year 1557, in which Siegfried is killed near the well during his sleep; thus the Northern and German accounts of his death are here combined.

The Nibelungen Lied, after having been almost entirely forgotten for several centuries, was at last rescued from this undeserved fate when the Swiss professor, Johann Jacob Bodmer, discovered a manuscript (C) of our poem at the castle of Hohenems in the Grisons in the year 1757. He published the latter part of the manuscript, beginning with stanza

\* p. 137.

1583 \* (towards the close of the twenty-sixth adventure), under the title of "Chriemhilden Rache und die Klage" (Kriemhild's Revenge and the Lament). Bodmer's edition met with a somewhat cool reception; indeed there were but few whose attention it engaged, and even they, like Lessing, took merely a slight and passing notice of the work. The next publication was made twenty-five years later, in 1782, by C. H. Müller, professor at the Joachimsthal Gymnasium in Berlin. He had applied for a copy of the poem to Bodmer, and the latter received from Hohenems a manuscript, which, however, was not the same (C) that had been used by him before, but another (A). Müller then published his edition, the text of which was taken from manuscript A to stanza 1583, while the remainder was reprinted from C (Bodmer's edition). On account of a wrong statement of Müller, many years elapsed before it was ascertained that Müller's publication was based on a mixed text. Jacob Grimm was the first who (in 1807) declared that Müller must have used two different manuscripts. Neither Bodmer's nor Müller's edition contained the division into stanzas.

The interest in Mediæval German poetry evidently began to increase about the year 1782, as appears from the fact that Müller was supported in his purpose of publishing the work by many persons of influence and high standing; and besides his edition of the Nibelungen Lied was dedicated to Frederick the Great of Prussia with the king's permission.

\* Or, in Zarncke's fifth edition, p. 251, 4.



Nevertheless our epic was still far from being fully appreciated. It is true that when Frederick had granted the dedication of the poem to him the royal secretary addressed a courteous letter (December 15, 1780) to Müller, and again, when the dedicatory copy was received, it drew forth a very favorable reply (October 31, 1782); but later (February 22, 1784) Frederick wrote his well-known letter, in which he strongly and in unflattering terms expressed his utter contempt of the work. It is probable that the king had then read the poem for the first time, or he may merely have been in one of his ungracious moods. At all events too much importance has been attached to this letter, and on the other hand Frederick cannot be greatly blamed for his lack of appreciation of our epic nor for his predilection for French literature. His partiality for the latter he still shared with many of his countrymen; it was only about fifty years before that time that Bodmer (1698–1783) had first, in 1721, attacked Gottsched (1700–1766) and his slavish preference for French authors, while Lessing, who died in 1781, had just struck the first mighty blow to free German literature from the French yoke. Yet Bodmer, although he issued the first edition of a portion of the *Nibelungen Lied*, had himself little confidence in the final success of the revival of early German poetry, nor did Lessing, as we have said before, pay any great attention to our epic. Even at a somewhat later period Goethe did not read the copy that Müller had sent him, while it is at least very doubtful if Schiller ever perused the book,

although he had received it from the library of the University of Jena, and had it in his possession from August, 1800, to September, 1801.

Among the men who at that time took an earnest and lively interest in the *Nibelungen Lied*, we must mention, besides the historian Johannes von Müller (1752–1809), who in 1783 and 1786 called the attention of the educated public to our poem, Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826), the famous translator of Homer, who read the *Nibelungen Lied* with his pupils at the Gymnasium of Eutin in the grand duchy of Oldenburg. But the great wave of genuine popular enthusiasm broke forth when the so-called romantic school of literature took hold of our epic, and has ever since been rolling onward. August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), by his lectures at Berlin in 1802 and 1803, contributed not a little to replace the great national heirloom on the lofty pedestal from which it had fallen through the indifference and misery of preceding centuries. At the same time the people, oppressed by Napoleon's tyranny, had come to look with longing eyes upon the treasures of the past, and were led to remember the glorious era when Europe bowed before the sceptre of the German emperors. The heroes of olden times were held up as models for the present, and served to inspire the nation with a new vitality and the irresistible resolution to break the chains with which the foreign conqueror had bound them, as before they had begun to throw off the yoke of literary dependence.

Among those who listened to Schlegel's lectures was Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen (1780-1856), who then was aroused to a sincere and lasting enthusiasm for the *Nibelungen Lied*, and who zealously, although not always with critical discernment, devoted the best part of his life to the study of the poem. Five editions, two translations, a commentary, and several other works bear witness to his great industry in the field of *Nibelung Literature*. Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), one of the founders of the romantic school, was engaged in 1805 in translating our epic. Goethe also became more interested in it, and in 1807 and 1809 read an "improvised translation of it to a select circle of ladies." At Königsberg K. Besseldt delivered, in 1814, eight lectures on the *Nibelungen Lied* "before an interesting assembly of the most cultured ladies and gentlemen." This furnished an opportunity to the well-known dramatic author, August von Kotzebue (1761-1819),—who, although a native of Weimar, was yet most unpatriotic and a Russian spy,—to write in disparagement of the *Nibelungen Lied*. His scornful opinions were not worth the opposition which they aroused, and they were soon buried in well-deserved oblivion. He died in 1819 at Mannheim from the dagger of the pure and noble-minded but too passionate Karl Ludwig Sand, a student of theology at Jena, who, teeming with a fervent love of his country, thought thus to revenge the scorn and the insults which Kotzebue had heaped on the German students in particular, and on German freedom in general.

When, in 1815, the war against Napoleon broke out anew, August Zeune published an edition of the *Nibelungen Lied*, which is of no great scientific value, as it was based mainly on Von der Hagen's edition of 1810, and the latter was chiefly founded on Müller's mixed text. Yet it is interesting to notice that Zeune's edition was destined especially for the students in the army (*Feld-und Zeltausgabe*), who carried it with them in the French campaign; and that, moreover, one of those students was Karl Lachmann (1793-1851), who, in the following year (1816), distinguished himself by his essay "On the Original Form of the Poem of the Nibelungs' Distress." \* Lachmann, after 1825 Professor at the University of Berlin, was soon recognized as the most eminent scholar in the whole department of Nibelung literature, and he retained this high rank among the learned to the end of his life. In the year 1826 appeared his edition of the poem which was based on manuscript A. It was followed, in 1829, by his "*Kritik der Sage*;" and the latter was reprinted in 1836, and formed a part (pages 333-349) of a volume entitled "*Zu den Nibelungen und zur Klage: Anmerkungen von K. L.*" Here he laid down his views as to the manner in which our epic originated and was composed. Lachmann's investigations concerning the *Nibelungen Lied*, and his untiring zeal, can hardly be overvalued, although one may not always agree with him in regard to some of the conclusions at which he arrived.

\* p. 140.

Since the year 1757 twenty-eight manuscripts of our epic have been discovered, of which some are complete in themselves, or nearly so, while others are mere fragments. After Lachmann's example, the German scholars designate the parchment manuscripts of the thirteenth and-fourteenth centuries by capitals ; while all others, whether written on parchment or on paper, are denoted by small letters. All these manuscripts may be classified in at least three divisions, which deviate more or less from each other, both as to the text and as to the number of stanzas in our epic. These divisions are represented by the manuscript A, which stands alone by itself, and by two groups of manuscripts whose chief representatives are B and C. The manuscript A contains the shortest text (2316 stanzas), while B, which is generally called the "common text," or the "Vulgata," as most manuscripts are based on it, numbers 2376, and C has 2440 stanzas. The manuscripts A and B, with the group represented by the latter, are furthermore distinguished from C, and the manuscripts based on it, by the last line of the poem, which reads in the former, "Ditze ist der Nibelunge nôt" (This is the Nibelungs' distress), and in the latter, "Daz ist der Nibelunge liet" (This is the lay of the Nibelungs). From what has just been indicated, and from what will be said hereafter, it is evident that A, B, and C, are the most important manuscripts.

The manuscript A, of the second half of the thirteenth century, was formerly at Hohenems, whence

Bodmer received it for C. H. Müller.\* By far the greater part of it is written by two different hands, in a hasty and careless manner. In 1807 it belonged to Professor M. Schuster, of Prague, and in 1810 it came into the possession of the royal library at Munich, where it still is (cod. germ. 34). Lachmann's editions (of 1826, 1841, 1851, and 1867) are based on this manuscript.

The manuscript B, of the middle of the thirteenth century, belonged once to the Counts of Werdenberg (near Hohenems), afterwards to the historian Aegidius Tschudi (1505-1572), and since 1773 has been at the library of the once famous Abbey of Sanct Gallen in Switzerland. Von der Hagen took the text of B as the basis for his editions of 1816 and 1820. Professor Karl Bartsch published a very valuable edition founded on this manuscript, in the year 1870, which shows also the different readings and the additional stanzas of C.

The manuscript C, of the first half of the thirteenth century, evidently written with great care and accuracy, was, as has been said above, the first manuscript of our poem that was discovered (in 1757), and was found at Hohenems by Bodmer.† It was offered for sale at Vienna in 1814 and 1815, during the Congress in the latter city, and came very near being purchased by the Imperial Court Library. Jacob Grimm, who was then at Vienna, had possession of the manuscript for a few days, and made an extract of it; his investigations were published in

\* p. 132.

† p. 131.

1815 in "Altdeutsche Wälder II., 145-180." In 1816 the manuscript was owned by Freiherr von Lassberg, and since 1855 it has belonged to the library of the princely house of Fürstenberg at Donaueschingen (in the grand Duchy of Baden).

Freiherr von Lassberg published an exact copy of this manuscript in 1821, which was reprinted in 1846. As the original manuscript at Donaueschingen is not very easy of access, Lassberg's publication is very important, and the best editions, those of Adolf Holtzmann (1857) and of Friedrich Zarncke (fifth edition, 1875), are based on it.

It is not necessary for our purpose to refer particularly to the remaining twenty-five manuscripts, of which a few are almost worthless. Yet we may state that A, B, and D (the latter in the royal library of Munich, cod. germ. 31) are complete; seven others, and among them C, are nearly so, while the remainder are fragments, and altogether contain hardly one fourth of the whole epic. A few manuscripts present a mixed text, as in the beginning they follow C and afterwards B, while several others form a transition group, since they contain the text of the group whose representative is B, and they have besides twenty additional stanzas of C. In this connection we may also indicate that none of our manuscripts contains the original text of the poem, but that all of them are more or less remote from it. Moreover a manuscript which was evidently written at an earlier epoch than another does not therefore necessarily present an earlier text, as on the other hand it is possible that

a manuscript of a later date may be based on an older text than a manuscript belonging to an earlier time.

There has been and still is a great difference of opinion among German scholars, not only as to which one of the manuscripts exhibits the earliest form of our epic, but also whether the epic is the creation of a real poet who took only the subject-matter from the ancient sagas and lays, or whether it presents merely several ancient and popular poems of unknown authors, which at first had no connection with each other, and were later united by a mere compiler into a whole poem. When Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), professor at Halle, endeavored to show that the Homeric poems were not the work of one poet (of Homer), but formed a collection of different hero-songs of great antiquity, the same theory was applied to the *Nibelungen Lied* by Professor Lachmann of Berlin. Lachmann, after comparing the manuscripts which were known at his time,\* came to the conclusion that the shortest text, as found in A, was the earliest, and that from it came by additions and corrections first B, and then C, while A had sprung in a similar manner from the original work, that is, from the songs referred to above. Furthermore he was convinced that our epic was originally composed of twenty lays, some of which were followed by continuations. In his editions since 1841 these twenty lays with their continuations are distinguished

\* The manuscripts found since are not of very great importance for the critique of the text.



in print from the remainder of the poem, that is, from those stanzas which he considered to be later additions, and therefore not original and genuine. In 1840, on the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the invention of printing, the twenty lays appeared in a "Prachtausgabe."

Lachmann's view in regard to the manuscript A, as exhibiting the earliest known text, was accepted during his life by all scholars, including even those who rejected his theory of the composition of the poem, that is, of the twenty lays. Jacob Grimm firmly believed in the unity of the work. Wilhelm Grimm adhered substantially to the same opinion, although he admitted that some particular parts of our epic might have been inserted from ancient songs. In this connection we refer to the correspondence between Lachmann and Wilhelm Grimm during 1820 and 1821,\* which bears evidence of the strict honesty and remarkable scholarship with which both men had arrived at their conclusions.

It was three years after Lachmann's death (1851) that his opinion concerning the manuscript A was attacked for the first time. This was done by Adolf Holtzmann, professor at the University of Heidelberg, in his "Untersuchungen über das Nibelungen Lied, Stuttgart, 1854." Holtzmann, by comparing the manuscripts endeavored to prove that C contained the earliest text, and that B, and then A, had sprung from it through omissions and changes. Thus the manner in which Holtzmann viewed the relation of the three

\* Edited by Zacher.

manuscripts to each other was exactly the contrary of Lachmann's theory.

On the preceding pages and in the Notes referring to this subject \* the attempt has been made to give at least an impartial and correct outline of the different theories of the leading German scholars on the manuscripts and the authorship of the *Nibelungen Lied*. As has been indicated, it would have required much more space than can be given here, to treat the subject fully in each particular aspect, and to do justice to all the learned men who have devoted their zeal and erudition to investigations concerning this great poem; for this reason the works of several eminent scholars, as Liliencron, Hermann Fischer, and Heinrich Fischer, have not been considered.† In conclusion, it may be said that Karl Simrock, the famous scholar and the translator of our epic, presents a view of the question which the writer of this volume considers to be generally correct. The opinion of Simrock, as found in the introduction to his translation of the *Nibelungen Lied*,‡ is briefly as follows. According to him, Lachmann was right upon the whole in giving the preference to the manuscript A, however carelessly it is written, yet he went too far in according to B and C merely the value of conjectures. B, and especially C, departed from the popular tradi-

\* See Note 3, p. 295.

† A list of the works on Nibelung literature is given in Zarneke's fifth edition of the poem and in R. von Muth's *Einführung zum Nibelungen Lied*.

‡ 39th edition, pp. xxvi, xxvii.

tions in order to give to their texts a finer, courtly polish. The very laziness of those who wrote A preserved us from innovations. We must find the earliest text out of all the three manuscripts, for it is contained in none of them alone, but must be collected from all of them. In regard to the author of the Nibelungen Lied, Simrock says that first the clergy, and at the time of the crusades also the knights, had abandoned heroic poetry. The latter would have been doomed to deteriorate and perish in the hands of vulgar singers, had not "a wandering minstrel (*Fahrender*) of noble birth, educated in the school of national poetry, and befriended at the courts on account of his rank, undertaken to collect into a single great poem the many-shaped folk-song, which still resounded with unabated force in many lands, and which celebrated the old demi-godlike heroes and folk-kings, Siegfried and Dietrich, in separate short lays. This great poem was no longer destined for singing, but for reading, like the romances which were then favorites at the courts. . . . The name of the poet who undertook such a grand patriotic work has not come down to us, else it would burn in all German hearts with the most beautiful colors. Although as a poet he had accomplished greater things than those courtly narrators who often were no more than translators, he modestly withdrew behind his work, which he did not consider his special property, since it was the production of a thousand years of the power of German epic poetry to which as a boy he had listened with delight, and with whose

glory his parents and grandparents had been replete. Albeit he had gathered the old songs with great industry, and had sketched and carried out with admirable art his new work which was to connect and unite all of them, yet, with respect to the folk-song, he could regard himself merely as a collector, arranger, and interpreter.”\* Simrock very appropriately refers to the fact that the first and earliest song begins with Kriemhild’s dream, which like a motto precedes the whole epic. Then he continues: “The poet could also afterwards admit occasionally entire songs, like that of Gunther’s bridal journey, which was so neatly evolved by Lachmann, or the lays of Siegfried’s wedding and of his death, which are attested still later as current among the people; then the two songs of Margrave Rüdiger (nearly the whole contents of the first of them, relating how he entertained the Burgundian kings with all their host, and presented them with gifts, ay, betrothed his daughter to the youngest of them, was written down in Icelandic prose in the *Vilkina Saga* from the mouth of German merchants of Bremen, Svest, and Münster); or that other, of the same Rüdiger’s tragic death, which can be considered as the most beautiful and touching lay that has ever been produced by heroic poetry. But twenty folk-songs of different authors could not possibly have agreed and embraced the whole contents of the hero-saga in such a way that the collector merely needed to put them in order and combine them by some interpolated stanzas.† In this

\* Simrock, pp. vi, vii.

† Ibid., pp. x, xi.

connection Simrock suggests that the poet probably heard various songs in different regions of Germany; he had to select from these songs, to supplement them, to avoid their defects, and combine their merits. Thus Simrock thinks it much more credible that the poet made use of two hundred songs, than that by an inconceivable good luck he had come into the possession of twenty lays which he had only to arrange in the manner indicated above. It is not to be imagined that the transformation of the many-shaped hero-song into a single poem was brought about so easily.\*

Nothing certain is known as to which part of Germany can claim the honor of having been the birth-place of our epic. Austria proper and the Court at Vienna, which then under its dukes formed a real and glorious portion of the German Empire, and had not yet become estranged from the common fatherland, as in the later era of the Habsburg dynasty, have often been considered the home of the Nibelungen Lied. This conclusion was adopted chiefly on the assumption that the poet was better acquainted with the localities on the Danube than with those on the Rhine. Yet it has since been shown that this is so only apparently, and we may here again quote Simrock's view of the question, as it is without doubt correct and well expressed: "The wandering minstrels and players did not confine themselves to one German court or to one German land: they went from land to land, from court to court, where a feast,

\* Simrock, p. xvi.

a wedding, an accolade, happened to be celebrated. . . . That in the *Nibelungen Lied* the regions on the Danube are described more accurately than those on the Rhine, is explained by the greater navigability of our principal river: the heroes embark at Worms in a boat and sail down to the mouths of the Rhine, where we must imagine Isenstein to be, as several places of this name, in but little disfigured form, still exist in those regions, where once the goddess of navigation, Isis or Nehalennia, was worshipped. In a similar manner they also return to Worms, again without stopping and disembarking on the way, wherefore Mainz, Köln, and other cities in their voyage to and fro, could remain unmentioned. Only in the vicinity of Worms they leave their boat and continue their journey on land, which is an evident proof that the poet was also well acquainted with the Rhine, since at that time between Mainz and Worms it was not navigable up stream. Merchants who sailed down the river from Strassburg used, on returning, to sell their barks in Mainz or in Köln." While thus in some respects it may be regretted that the name of the poet and of the place where our epic first took the form in which we now possess it are unknown, yet we can console ourselves by the fact that the *Nibelungen Lied* is the noble heirloom of Germany's past grandeur, and in a certain sense as well the production as the property of the whole nation. Carlyle's appropriate remarks in regard to the poet may be quoted here: "His great strength is an unconscious, instinctive strength,

wherein truly lies his highest merit. The whole spirit of chivalry, of love and heroic valor, must have lived in him and inspired him. Everywhere he shows a noble sensibility; the sad accents of parting friends, the lamentings of women, the high daring of men,—all that is worthy and lovely prolongs itself in melodious echoes through his heart. A true old singer, and taught of Nature herself! Neither let us call him an inglorious Milton, since now he is no longer a mute one. What good were it that the four or five letters composing his name could be printed, and pronounced with absolute certainty? All that is mortal in him is gone utterly: of his life and its environment, as of the bodily tabernacle he dwelt in, the very ashes remain not: like a fair, heavenly apparition, which indeed he was, he has melted into air, and only the voice he uttered, in virtue of its inspired gift, yet lives and will live.”

In the Introduction a few general hints have been given in regard to early German versification. It will be sufficient here to refer briefly to the form of the Nibelung stanza. “The measure varies in effect, sometimes bold and strong, with a fine irregularity of movement, sometimes sweet and musical, but frequently rough and halting, and it requires some familiarity before it adjusts itself to the ear.”\* The versification of the Nibelungen Lied consists of four lines, each of which is divided into two hemistichs. The verse or line is based on the principle of accentuation, and there are generally six accents to every

\* Bayard Taylor, *Studies*, p. 109.

verse, while it is permitted either to suppress or to supply unaccented syllables. This liberty was taken also in earlier German and English poetry. The first hemistich of every line ends almost always with a ringing cæsura, i. e. a cæsura of two syllables, of which the first is accented and the second is unaccented or redundant. The last hemistich of the stanza has four accents, while all the others have three. The rhymes are male rhymes, that is, only the last syllables of the verses agree in sound. It is believed by many scholars that the Nibelung verse is a modification of the Old German verse, which contained eight accented syllables. The schema of the form of the Nibelung stanza, without regard to the unaccented syllables, except to the second one of the cæsura, is as follows: \* —

/	/	/	/	/	/
/	/	/	/	/	/
/	/	/	/	/	/
/	/	/	/	/	/

We may now give the first two stanzas of the poem, with the accents marked.

Uns íst in álten maéren wúnders víl geseft  
 Von héleden lóbebaéren von grózer árebeít;  
 Von freúde und hô'ehgezít'en, von wéinen únde klágen,  
 Von küéner récken stríten muget ír nu wúnder hoéren ságen.  
 Ez wúohs in Búregónden ein víl édel mágedí'n,  
 Dáz in állen lánden niht schoéners móhte sí'n,  
 Kriembílt geheízen: diu wárt ein schoéne wí'p.  
 Dar úmbe múosen dégene víl verliésén den lí'p.

\* See Note 4, p. 303.



In the translations given in the course of the first two chapters, the metre of the original has been retained, yet the last line has not been lengthened, nor has the irregularity caused by the option of suppressing or supplying the unaccented syllables been imitated. It is believed that a too slavish imitation of the Nibelung verse may prove distasteful to English ears.

IV. The Nibelungen Lied has been translated into Modern German by several scholars of great repute, among whom we may mention here Karl Simrock, G. Pfitzer, and K. Bartsch. Simrock's translation, of which now thirty-nine editions have appeared, is still considered the best. Thomas Carlyle was the first who emphatically called the attention of the English-speaking public to our epic, and in his remarkable essay on the subject (Westminster Review, 1831) he translated several stanzas with much spirit. Since that time the interest in the Nibelungen Lied and in Teutonic lore generally has greatly increased both in England and in this country. In the year 1846 there appeared a partial translation of the poem by J. Gostik, in his "Spirit of German Poetry," and in 1848 Jonathan Birch published his translation of the twenty lays which Lachmann considered genuine,\* under the title "Das Nibelungen Lied; or, Lay of the Last Nibelungers," of which a second edition appeared in 1878. The first complete translation was made by W. N. Lettsom, in 1850, who called his version "The Fall of the Nibelungers; otherwise the Book of

\* p. 140.

Kriemhild." This is not the place to point out the excellences and defects of these translations; but it will be sufficient to say that upon the whole Lettson's work is more faithful to the original, both in spirit and in form, than that of Birch, although the latter is not without its merits. In this connection we may also refer to the first American version, in which, under the title "Echoes from Mistland," the story of the Nibelungen Lied is retold in pure, graceful, and very poetic prose. The earliest translation of which we know, was into Netherlandish, but it has been found only in two fragments, which seem to have belonged to one and the same manuscript of the thirteenth century. Since the re-discovery of our epic by Bodmer, there have appeared, besides the Modern German and English translations, versions into French (in prose), Italian, Hungarian, and Russian.

V. Thus, while the Nibelung saga, as has been repeatedly stated, has not perished in the minds and hearts of the German people, the fame of the greatest poem of Mediæval Germany has spread far beyond the boundaries of its home. The Nibelung story has furnished to the genius and imaginative flight of modern German poets rich material for new creations, based on our epic and on the kindred Northern traditions. The grandeur of the saga; the deep interest which its tragical end arouses in all feeling hearts; the well-delineated character of the heroes and heroines; the sympathy with which we are inspired in beholding the lovely picture of

Kriemhild in the first part of the poem; the heroic figure of Hagen in the second part; Rüdiger's touching farewell of his friends before he encounters them in combat; his inward struggle between his oath to Kriemhild, his duty towards Etzel, and his friendship for the royal brothers; again, the moment when he gives his shield to Hagen,—the beauty and greatness of all these and many other scenes can be equalled by few literary productions of the past or present, and might well tempt a poetic mind to choose the Nibelung subject as the basis for new artistic compositions. Yet, as a matter of fact, there are but very few authors of modern Nibelung poems who can be considered to have accomplished this task with success, while several have treated the saga in an unpoetic way, or in an arbitrary manner, contrary to the spirit and contents of ancient tradition. Most writers have selected the form of the drama for their works; a few have written epic poems.\*

The greatest of all Nibelung dramas that as yet have been composed, is undoubtedly "Brunhild," a ✓ tragedy by Emanuel Geibel.† The author is one of the most renowned lyric poets of our time, and a great scholar. Although dramatic poetry is not his specialty, his "Brunhild" is a production which, in elegance of diction, force and clearness in the delineation of characters and incidents, is equalled by few dramas of the present day. Poetic genius,

\* See Note 5, p. 304.

† Translated by the writer of this volume, and published by Ginn and Heath, Boston, 1879.

together with the correct understanding of the saga, make Geibel's tragedy incomparably superior to any and all of the modern Nibelung dramas, although his work does not comprise the second part of the traditions, — the Revenge. The scene opens at the royal castle at Worms, in the early morning, after the double marriage of Gunther and Siegfried, and the time is previous to the introduction of Christianity into Germany. In the first act there is already a dim foreshadowing of future events, when Volker, referring to the wedding feast which had just ended, says to Hagen, —

“For me the loud carousal had no relish.  
It seemed as if a storm, all joy oppressing,  
Were darkening with its gloom the festal hall.  
And midst the play of harps and glare of lights  
A boding fell on me of coming woe.”

The combat at Isenstein is well described, and the use of the Tarnkappe is fortunately avoided, as Siegfried is represented to have fought in Gunther's armor with closed visor, and this fact is known to none save Gunther. Hagen relates to Volker the contest between Brunhild and her adversary. Gunther tells Siegfried of Brunhild's resistance in the bridal chamber, and Siegfried finally yields to the demands of the king; Brunhild is for the second time vanquished by Siegfried,\* while the latter, when promising his aid to Gunther, exclaims, —

\* The contest is supposed to occur between the end of the first and the beginning of the second act.

“Take my oath :

For me the fray, for thee the fray's reward.

Whom Kriemhild loves, no other woman charms,

Albeit she wore e'en Freyja's magic belt.”

A masterly stroke of Geibel's invention is the introduction of Sigrun, a priestess in Brunhild's train. When Sigrun arouses Brunhild, who is absorbed in thought, Brunhild replies to her, —

“Ah ! never canst thou measure what it means,

*To love the one, and yet to be the other's,*

Of whom thy heart knows naught, — with life and soul

Enthralled to him whom fate has on thee thrust.”

Siegfried, at a former time, had landed on the shore of her native land, and she then was filled with fervent love of the hero ; yet she let him depart, being confident that he would come back and return her love. Knowing from Sigrun's prophecies that none but Siegfried can vanquish her, she vows to marry only him who will overcome her in combat. She must believe now that she had been deceived by the oracle, and therefore she scoffs at the gods : —

“It was

Foretold ‘Siegfried alone can conquer thee,’

And Gunther, Gunther, conquered me. Oh, that

Remains a clashing discord which disgraces them.\*

And till it shall be solved, will I, Brunhild,

The mortal woman, struck with grief and woe,

Defiant lift my brow 'gainst such deccit,

And shriek into the clouds, ‘Ye, gods, have lied !’”

There is a beautiful scene between Giselher and Kriemhild in the castle garden at Worms, followed

\* The gods.

by another between Siegfried and Kriemhild. The latter had become aware of Siegfried's absence during the previous night when he subdued Brunhild for Gunther. Siegfried resists the repeated and urgent requests of Kriemhild to tell her where he was, and at last when she bursts into tears he is about to leave her in anger. At this moment Brunhild enters, who, perceiving Kriemhild's tears, salutes her with scornful words and departs quickly. Siegfried, irritated at Brunhild's insult, consoles his wife.

“Thou shalt not weep, Kriemhild. No, no ! I have  
What dries thy tears. And let there come from it  
Whatever may, now shalt thou truly see  
That proud one in her nakedness, and know  
What I to spare her — her alone — concealed.  
This morn, when missed by thee, I was with her.”

After this the curtain falls, and the second act closes. In a dialogue between Volker and Hagen the latter gives expression to his wrath against Siegfried, and when Volker asks him for the cause of it, Hagen retorts, —

“Should I now say,  
I hate him, as the bull the scarlet hates,  
From deep and inborn enmity of nature,  
Were 't not enough of answer ? Yet I'm urged  
By silent wrath repressed for months to pour  
It out before thee, Volker. Lo ! on me  
Life has bestowed but little happiness.  
I am the foster-child of fortune ; ne'er  
A wife beloved has rested in these arms,  
Nor child has smiled on me. Nor house nor wealth  
Have I obtained. Of victory even were

The sweat, the dust, the care alone my part ;  
For others was the fruit, remained the fame.  
I never have complained, for this I knew,  
One thing, which for my weary lot gave me  
A full return : the proud self-confidence  
Of being then the pillar of this realm.  
To me 't was wife and child and wealth and all.  
And now when I alone for twenty years  
Have propped this house and spilled a hundred times  
My blood to strengthen it ; now, at the end,  
That youth with flowing flaxen hair appears  
And enters like a victor house and hearts,  
Commands in council and in field, and *I*  
Must, like a rusty weapon, which is spared  
For service done of old, stand in a corner.  
Ha, death and ruin ! ”

Hagen, in conversation with Brunhild, gives utterance to his belief that Siegfried does not love Kriemhild. As Brunhild questions him, he reports that he had secretly at night observed Kriemhild's husband ; how he stepped forth on the stone terrace of the castle, exclaimed in a pitiful tone, “ Poor woman ! ” and then quickly went away. Hagen concludes that Siegfried can have meant no other but Kriemhild. Brunhild, moved by these tidings, suddenly meets Siegfried, reminds him of the glorious days they had formerly passed together, and as Siegfried does not seem to understand the hidden meaning of her words, she says at last, “ None but the heroine should be the hero's wife.” Siegfried, after extolling Kriemhild's charms, tells the queen : —

“ Ah ! never, never, nay, not e'en in dream,  
A feeling rose in me as loved I thee.”

Brunhild's wrath knows no bounds, and she says to Siegfried, —

“I hate thee,  
With all my soul I hate thee, and I have  
Thee always hated, and will hate thee still,  
While yet a breath of life shall dwell in me.”

In this mood Brunhild encounters Kriemhild before the temple at whose altar the two royal ladies were to celebrate midsummer feast together. With haughty and disdainful words, Brunhild offends Kriemhild, until the latter, when Brunhild calls her a bondman's wife, is aroused and retorts with glowing anger. Thus all is revealed, and Brunhild demands Siegfried's death from Gunther, while Hagen is eager to be the instrument of her revenge. Gunther, after a noble effort to resist Brunhild's powerful will, consents at last to Siegfried's murder, especially as his jealousy is awakened when Brunhild hints at her love of Siegfried. One of the finest scenes is Siegfried's taking leave of Kriemhild before he goes to the chase in the Odenwald. The murderous deed is supposed to occur between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth act. In the last scene of the tragedy, Brunhild enters triumphantly to behold her victim, and rejoice in the accomplished revenge; but soon at the sight of the corpse her hatred passes away, and she exclaims, —

“Ay, know it all of you, this man I've loved,  
Ay, from the very first, and none besides.  
Him have I loved despite decrees of fate,



Despite the stars. Forsooth, the gods may crush me,  
But never shall they wrench from me my love!"

Seized by an irresistible desire to be united at least in death with him whom in life she preferred to all others, she stabs herself with Siegfried's dagger. Kriemhild vows to wreak vengeance, and Sigrun, in prophetic ecstasy, announces the bloody fate of future days.

Among the modern epic poems based on our saga, W. Jordan's "Nibelunge" is by far the most renowned. It comprises two parts, — the Siegfried Saga, and Hildebrant's Heimkehr. We can here but briefly refer to this poem, as it is very long, the plot very intricate, and therefore even quite a lengthy extract could hardly do justice to the work. Jordan has taken his material chiefly from the Volsunga Saga, yet he has also availed himself of the Edda, of the first part of the Nibelungen Lied, and of the Thidrek Saga. Moreover he has drawn to a great extent on his imagination. The form he has chosen is that of the old German verse, with four accented syllables and alliteration. With this versification a most wonderful power of the language was required to compose for modern taste such a great work of art as we see in his "Nibelunge."

From want of space we can only refer to Richard Wagner's famous musical drama, "The Ring of the Nibelung," and to William Morris's epic poem, "Sigurd the Volsung." Both are works of rare merit. In conclusion, it may be said that poetry and music were not the only arts by which the Nibelung story

was celebrated; the great saga found expression also in some of the most renowned paintings of the world. Besides the ingenious works of Peter von Cornelius, the noble achievements of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld must be mentioned. The latter's Nibelung frescos in the halls of the Königsbau in Munich attest the master's hand. True, indeed, have been found the prophecies of old, that Siegfried's glory will last forever.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GUDRUN. — OUTLINE OF THE POEM.

THE national epics of Mediæval Germany arose from a number of shorter lays, which in the course of time flowed together into a deep, powerful, and majestic stream. Of such mighty streams of poetry, Germany has two: the one roaring through the rocks, foaming and bellowing in eddies and deep abysses,—the Nibelungen Lied; the other flowing on clear and smooth, yet deep and strong, through pleasing landscapes,—the poem of Gudrun. This epic presents a peculiar charm on account of the horizon which it expands about us; it is the sea with its waves, its storms, its ships, its sea-kings and their voyages.\*

The poem of Gudrun has been transmitted to us in only one manuscript, which belongs to the beginning of the sixteenth century, and which we owe to the German Emperor, Maximilian I. At his command manuscript copies of several ancient poems were taken, and this collection is known by the name of "Ambraser Handschrift," as it was formerly kept at the imperial castle Ambras in Tyrol. Our poem,

\* Vilmar.

comprising the sagas of three generations in thirty-two songs, which according to the custom of the age were called adventures, is divided into three sections. The first two form, as it were, an introduction to the story of Gudrun, while the latter begins only with the third section.

### SECTION I.

I. — IV. — The hero of this section is Hagen, the son of Sigeband, king of Ireland. The latter name designates a place in Holland. A part of Texel is still called Eijerland. Sigeband held a great festival and tournament, in the course of which he and his guests listened with delight to the songs of a minstrel, and their attention was wholly absorbed by the pleasures of the feast. In the meantime Hagen, then only seven years old, walked about in the enclosure of the royal castle, accompanied by a noble maiden, to whose care he had been intrusted. All at once the joys of the festival were doomed to be changed to sorrow. An ill-boding roar as of mighty pinions cleft the air, and a huge griffin drew near.

Deep shadows were descending where'er the griffin flew,  
As if a cloud were passing; and strong was he to view.  
Beneath the griffin's power broke down the forest wide;  
And as the noble maiden the flying bird espied,  
She fled and left behind her the child remaining yonder.  
So strange was the adventure, it might be called a wonder.  
Young Hagen, loudly crying, was filled with dire dismay;  
The bird with mighty pinions soared high with him away.

The griffin bore the child to a distant and desolate island to have him devoured by its young ones.

One of the brood took hold of Hagen, and as it hopped from tree to tree, it happened to alight at last on a branch which broke beneath its weight. In that emergency the young griffin dropped the child from its claws, and Hagen succeeded in hiding himself in the brushwood. Afterwards he came to a cave, where he met three royal maidens, who had taken refuge there from fear of the griffin, by whom they, like himself, had formerly been carried to the lonely island. The maidens tended the youth with great kindness, and he grew up under their care. After they had passed a few years together, Hagen one day became aware of a ship that had just stranded, and the corpses of her crew had been driven to the shore. Finding among them a dead knight, he stripped the corpse of the armor and put it on; he also took the knight's sword and bow. He intended to return to the cave, and scarcely had clad himself in the mail when he heard above his head a great roaring as of the wind, and saw the old griffin sweeping down upon him.

Then with his childlike power he aimed against his foe  
Full many a pointed arrow, and shot them from his bow.  
He could not wound the griffin; it was of no availing.  
Then with his sword he tried it; he heard the maidens wailing.  
Despite his youthful bearing he yet was not bereft  
Of daring mood; and fiercely the griffin's wing he cleft.

After a short combat the old griffin fell dead to the ground beneath Hagen's sword, and the same fate overtook the other griffins who came to attack him. Henceforth Hagen and the three maidens

could wander freely over the whole island, and their eager desire was to espy a ship that would take them away from the barren shore on which they had lived so long. In his wanderings and hunting through the trackless forest, Hagen came across a wild beast (*gabilân*) much resembling a dragon. The monster attacked him, but Hagen slew it with his sword and drank its blood, which gave him superhuman strength. This incident is evidently an imitation of Siegfried's slaying of the dragon in the Nibelung sagas. Immediately afterwards he meets a lion, who, as we must infer from the connection, had fought with the monster and was saved by Hagen. This reminds us of the story of "Henry the Lion."

At last Hagen, gazing upon the sea, perceived a vessel.

With might young Hagen shouted, and did not cease to shout,  
Howe'er the roaring tempest the wild waves tossed about.

The sailors were at first reluctant to approach the shore, as they took the maidens, whose attire consisted of moss woven together, for mermaids; yet they were appeased when Hagen besought them in the name of Christ to take him and the ladies aboard. After the latter had received rich garments, they and Hagen were courteously welcomed by the commander of the vessel, the Count of Garadie. The latter happened to be a neighbor of Sigeband, Hagen's father, who, in a bitter feud, had slain many knights of the count. Therefore, as soon as Hagen had revealed his parentage, the count determined to keep him as a

hostage. Hagen, enraged at this conduct, commanded the sailors to steer at once to his native land. As they refused and were about to lay hands on him, he thrust thirty of them into the sea. He would not have spared the count from the same doom if the ladies had not interfered. The crew then submitted to his will, and the vessel arrived in Ireland, where Hagen's mother recognized her son by a golden cross on his breast. Great were the joys of the parents when it was certain that their child, whom they had supposed for many years to be dead, was restored to them. At Hagen's entreaties, Sigeband and the count were reconciled, and were friends from that time. Many came to Balyan, Sigeband's fortress, to see the young prince. Hagen soon after was dubbed knight, and his father bestowed the crown on him; while one of the maidens, a king's daughter from India, who had shared his sojourn on the desolate island, and whose name was Hilde, became the wife of the young king. His bravery was known far and wide, and his enemies feared him, while he was merciful towards the weak.

On warlike enterprises into his enemies' land  
He spared the poor from ravage of fire with powerful hand;  
Whenever he encountered a warrior overbearing,  
He broke his burghs and slew him with dire revenge un-  
sparing.

Afterward his wife bore him a daughter, who was named Hilde like her mother, and was brought up with the greatest care. As she became a maiden of wondrous beauty, many were the wooers of the noble

princess ; but her father Hagen did not consider any of them worthy of her. The kings and nobles who demanded the fair maiden's hand were compelled to enter the lists against Hagen, and all of them were vanquished, while the messengers of such as did not venture to face the fierce monarch were hanged. Thus was he rightly called the "demon among all kings" (*Vâlant aller künige*).

## SECTION II.

V.—VIII.— On the weather-beaten coasts of Northern Germany in the land of the Hegelings, ruled the valiant King Hetel. Among his kinsmen and friends the most distinguished were Wat, of Sturm-land; Horant and Frut, of Denmark; Morung, of Nif-land; and Irolt, of Ortland. The fame of young Hilde's great beauty had spread far and wide, and soon reached the land of the Hegelings. King Hetel, having lost his father and mother, was advised by his friends to choose a wife, and Morung spoke of the charms of Princess Hilde.

Then said the royal Hetel : "The people all relate  
That whosoe'er will woo her incurs her father's hate,  
And for the maid has perished full many a noble knight ;  
My friends shall never suffer for me such woful plight."

Yet soon Hetel's desire to wed fair Hilde grew so strong that he forgot to think of the danger to his friends, and became utterly regardless of the consequences that might be brought on by his all-absorbing love. He at once despatched messengers to summon Horant from his province to the court.



When the latter and Frut appeared, the king, in the course of the festival which was held in their honor, questioned Horant about Hilde.

Then asked of him King Hetel : “ Why could it not betide  
That yet her sire would give me the beauteous maid as bride?  
Is he so brave, to woo her I shall be much delighted,  
And who will help me win her shall richly be requited.”

As the king persisted in his determination, Frut advised him to send for the stout old knight Wat, as the enterprise could not succeed without him. Wat arrived at the royal castle, and Hetel apprised him of what was expected of his prowess.

Sir Wat replied with anger : “ Whoe’er told this to thee,  
If I to-day should perish, he would not grieve for me.  
'Tis none but Frut of Denmark who has insinuated  
That I, to win fair Hilde for thee, be delegated.

“ The fair and lovely maiden is guarded with such care,  
As Frut and Horant told thee, and thou art well aware,  
Because she is so beauteous. I wot of no forbearing,  
Until they both shall join me in your emprise with daring.”

Wat sarcastically thanked the two champions for the great concern they took in his military renown; but Frut and Horant declared that they would joyfully share the dangers of the voyage to Hagen in company with him, and at Frut’s advice the following stratagem was adopted. A strong and magnificent ship was built of cypress wood, in the hold of which many armed men were concealed. In this vessel, and in some barks, a host of warriors, under the command of Wat, Frut, and Horant, embarked for Ireland, after they had cordially taken leave of

King Hetel, who remained at Hegelingen. The adventurers landed at Hagen's mighty sea fortress, Balyan, and gave themselves out as merchants who had been banished from Hetel's kingdom. To give countenance to their stratagem, they carried with them a rich store of merchandise of every kind. In order to conciliate fierce Hagen, they presented him with costly gifts, especially with horses of pure Castilian blood, and with suits of gorgeous armor; while for the queen and the ladies of the court they brought gold, jewels, and many other things which please women. Hagen promised them peace and protection in his land, and they put up their booths in which they spread out the precious goods which they had brought, gaining at the same time the favor of all, and especially of the ladies, by their liberality in dealing with them. At last they came near attaining their real object, as, at the queen's desire, they were presented to her and to the Princess Hilde. The warlike aspect of Wat, Frut, and Horant, although in the guise of merchants, aroused the admiration of all, and the appearance of the grim, gray-bearded hero Wat was particularly striking.

King Hagen's wife and daughter began with jesting mood  
To ask Sir Wat, the warrior, if it to him seemed good  
To sit with beauteous women, or if he thought it fitter  
For him to fight with courage in contest fierce and bitter.

To them old Wat gave answer: "One thing doth suit me  
more,

Though I sat with fair women so sweetly ne'er before;  
Whenever it could happen, for me 't were more inviting  
With valiant knights and heroes in combat to be fighting."

Then gayly laughed the maiden, of charms and beauty rare;  
She saw it pleased him little to be with women fair.

Soon after, while the knights of Hagen were engaged in games of chivalry, Wat showed the king what he could do in combat, although he pretended to know nothing about knightly warfare. One evening the valiant champion Horant began to sing, and delighted the royal family and the whole court by the beauty and sweetness of his song. The queen bade Horant come to her apartments, and asked him to sing for her every evening.

When now the night was ended and there drew near the dawn,  
Horant began his singing, so that in grove and lawn  
The birds became all silent, because he sang so sweetly;  
The people who were sleeping sprang from their couches  
fleetly.

The cattle in the forests forsook their pasture ground;  
The creeping creatures playing among the grass around, —  
The fishes in the water, — all in their sports were ceasing.  
The minstrel might most truly rejoice in art so pleasing.

Whate'er he might be singing, to no one seemed it long;  
Forgotten in the minster were priest and choral song.  
Church bells no longer sounded so sweetly as before,  
And every one who heard him longed for the minstrel sore.

Delighted by the sweet strain of Horant's voice, the young Princess Hilde secretly sent for him, and after he had sung one of his most beautiful lays, he succeeded in apprising her of King Hetel's wooing. The royal lady intimated that she would consent to marry the king, and asked Horant to sing to her then every day.

He said to beauteous Hilde : “ Most noble maiden fair,  
My lord and royal master has at his palace e’er  
Twelve singers who surpass me in skill, and sing more meetly.  
However sweet their singing, my king yet sings most sweetly.

Hilde agreed to flee with King Hetel’s vassals, and the latter had everything prepared for the event. After a few days Wat appeared with some of his knights at the court, and told King Hagen that they were about to take leave of him, pretending that King Hetel had reconciled himself to them. Wat begged Hagen as a token of honor and good will towards them to pay them, with his wife and daughter, a visit aboard their ships. Hagen consented to his request.

On the following day, the royal family, accompanied by a great train of ladies and knights, went to the shore. While the king’s attention was directed to a boat, and the queen gazed on the gorgeous splendor in the booths, Hilde was separated from her parents before they became aware of it. The princess, with some of her favorite maidens, had gone on board the main ship ; the anchors had been raised and the vessel moved off, while the knights who had been concealed in its hold appeared on the deck. The queen wrung her hands in despair, and Hagen, full of wrath, called for his spear, declaring that he would slay the traitors.

Then merrily said Morung : “ Be not in haste, I pray.  
Howe’er you may push forward to chase us on our way,  
Had you a thousand warriors prepared for strife and slaughter,  
We’d quickly cool their valor, and thrust them in the water.”

Hagen was compelled to abstain from the immediate pursuit of his enemies, as his ships were in a bad condition. The Hegelings sped on gayly, and reached Waleis in Holland, — a region whose name was derived from the river Waal, and which formed the western boundary of Hetel's realm. There they encamped, and great was their joy when, after a few days, Hetel arrived, followed by a great number of his knights. The king tenderly embraced his bride, and among blooming flowers, under silken tents, the warriors sat around fair Hilde and her maidens.

At the break of the following day the vassals of King Hetel espied a sail on the sea, and they were soon aware that Hagen approached with many of his knights. The latter were encountered by the Hegelings on the landing-place, and a fierce combat began.

Then hither flew and thither the whizzing spears with might;  
Each champion 'neath the buckler was eager in the fight  
To deeply wound his enemy, athwart the hauberk gleaming.  
The waves were crimson-colored, with heroes' blood all teeming.

King Hagen, full of anger, leaped forward in the sea.  
Unto the shore he waded; no braver knight than he!  
Full many pointed arrows against him were seen flying,  
Like flakes of snow, from warriors of Hetel's host defying.

And afterwards resounded the broadswords' mighty clang.  
Those who would slay King Hagen must needs give way with  
pang

Before his strokes of prowess. Then Hetel came, assailing  
His bride's beloved father. Fair Hilde was seen wailing.

Hetel was wounded by Hagen, Hagen by Wat. At Hilde's entreaty the two kings were reconciled, and the combat ended. Hetel took his bride to his royal residence at Matelan, where the wedding was celebrated with the consent and in the presence of King Hagen.

### SECTION III.

IX. — XXXII. — Wat, Morung, and Horant went home to their provinces, while Hetel and Hilde lived in great happiness together, and peace reigned in their land for many years. Afterward two children were born to them, — a maiden named Gudrun, and a son called Ortwein. Gudrun became the most beautiful of women, more beautiful even than her mother had been, while Ortwein was instructed in everything pertaining to royal and knightly accomplishments by the old and faithful Wat, and soon became a dauntless champion. Gudrun was wooed by many kings, yet her father would not bestow her on any of them, as he was haughty and deemed all her suitors beneath his rank. One of them was Siegfried, king of Moorland, and a warrior of peerless valor. The original idea in regard to Moorland was a land of moors and heaths on the northern coast of Germany; yet according to the predilections of the age, our poet fancied a real kingdom of the Moors, and thus Siegfried appears in our poem as a pagan of dark complexion. Siegfried's suit was rejected by King Hetel. Soon after, Hartmut, son of King Ludwig of Normandy, heard of Gudrun's

famous beauty, and sent messengers to Hetel to demand her in marriage. His offer was scornfully rejected, as Ludwig had once been a vassal of Hagen, Hilde's father. A third wooer of great renown appeared in the person of Herwig of Seeland (probably of the Friesic Sealands); but his endeavors to win the fair maiden were of no avail. Afterward Hartmut himself came in disguise to Hetel's court, and secretly informed Gudrun who he was. The princess, filled with compassion at the sight of the noble youth, advised him to flee at once, as his life was at stake if her father should know him and her purpose. Hartmut fled, determined to win the beautiful lady by force.

All of a sudden, Herwig of Seeland invaded Hetel's realm with three thousand knights, and approached the royal residence. A fierce combat took place near the castle gate.

There streamed forth from the helmets the wind as hot as  
flame :

So fought the dauntless Herwig. This saw the royal dame,  
The beauteous maiden Gudrun. As she the combat sighted,  
She was at Herwig's prowess both saddened and delighted.

Hetel and Herwig engaged in a personal contest.

Fair Gudrun saw the combat, and heard the martial sound.  
Like to a ball is fortune, and ever turns around.

Then from the castle chamber the royal maid cried out :  
" King Hetel, noble father, the blood flows all about  
Athwart the mighty hauberks. With gore from warlike labor  
The walls are sprinkled. Herwig is a most dreadful neighbor."

The combat was interrupted by Gudrun's interference. Herwig declared his glowing love for the fair princess, and the latter gladly consented to become his wife. Peace and friendship were firmly established between the two parties, and the feast of betrothal was celebrated, while the wedding was to be held a year after.

When Siegfried of Moorland learned that Gudrun had been betrothed to Herwig, he waxed wroth, and remembered the scornful rejection of his suit. He at once mustered a large army, and set sail for Herwig's country, which he devastated with merciless hand. Herwig's warriors fought bravely against their foes, but were sorely pressed by their superior numbers. Herwig sent messengers to Gudrun to apprise her of his calamity. At her eager supplication, Hetel, followed by Wat, Morung, and Horant, with a powerful host, set out to aid Herwig. After long and fierce fighting Siegfried was compelled to take refuge in a fortress situated by a large river, where he was besieged by his foes.

In the meantime Hartmut had been informed by spies that Hetel with his great vassals had left his country on a distant enterprise. He therefore resolved to invade the Hegelingen land with a mighty army, well knowing that Gudrun and her mother had remained at the castle of Matelan with a small retinue of knights. The Normans landed on the shore of Hetel's country, and Hartmut sent messengers to the royal castle again to woo Gudrun. The latter told them artlessly and frankly that she



was affianced to Herwig, and therefore could not listen to the proposals of another man. Thereupon the Normans attacked the castle, which was taken and destroyed after a fierce struggle. Gudrun, with sixty-two maidens, was carried away captive by the Normans, while her mother Hilde gazed mournfully on the departing ships. At once messengers were despatched to King Hetel to inform him of the sad events that had passed during his absence. An honorable peace was concluded with Siegfried, and the latter declared his readiness to aid Hetel and Herwig. Upon ships taken by Wat from some pilgrims, they pursued the Normans.

On an island, called Wülpensand, at the mouth of the river Schelde, the Normans had rested, being confident that they were too far from Matelan to fear King Hetel's pursuit. Yet all at once there appeared some sails on the sea, which the Normans at first took for ships of holy pilgrims, but soon became aware that they belonged to the people whom they had sorely wronged. Then took place the famous battle on the Wülpensand, renowned in ancient songs, lasting from early morning to night. Among the Normans, Ludwig and Hartmut were the most distinguished warriors, while Hetel, Wat, and Herwig accomplished deeds of prowess for the sake of regaining the pure and lovely Gudrun. The landing-place was fiercely defended by the Normans against the Hegelings.

Then all of them pushed shoreward and faced their mighty foe.  
The winds from Alpine mountains ne'er sweep the flakes of  
snow

As thickly as the javelins from warlike hands came flying.  
None could prevent the damage, though all might now be  
trying.

When they had gained a landing, one saw the foaming flood,  
From those who fell in combat, all reddened deep with blood.  
On every side the billows, in crimson color flowing,  
Stretched farther than a javelin could reach by mighty  
throwing.

Great was the valor of Siegfried of Moorland and  
of his knights who had espoused Hetel's cause.

No bolder knight than Siegfried, the Moorish king, was seen ;  
That day with blood he darkened full many a hauberk's sheen.

The Normans held their ground with unwavering  
firmness, despite the bravery of Hetel, Herwig, Wat,  
and Ortwein, Gudrun's brother, and the fight lasted  
until sundown. At last Hetel was slain by Ludwig  
of Normandy, and loud were the wailings of Gudrun,  
when she learned the sad tidings.

But when grim Wat, the hero, knew that his king was dead,  
Then like a wild boar roared he ; and like the evening red,  
From his swift strokes of prowess, the helmets were seen  
gleaming ;

Both he and all his warriors with anger fierce were teeming.

Hetel's vassals, eager to revenge the death of  
their king, slew some of their own men, as in the  
darkness they could not tell friend from foe. Thus  
the combat had to cease ; but the Normans under  
cover of the night stole away to their ships, set sail,  
and, carrying Gudrun and the other maidens as cap-  
tives with them, got clear of the island, before the  
Hegelings became aware of their stratagem.

On the break of the following day Wat and Ortwein proposed to pursue the enemy, but Frut declared that it would be of no avail, as the Normans were thirty miles ahead of them, and the remainder of the Hegeling host was no match for the great number of their foes. The dead were buried, and a convent was erected on the battle-field that prayers might be said for the souls of the slain heroes.

With heavy hearts the Hegelings set sail for their home, and mournful was their entrance into the royal castle.

"Oh woe! what can have happened?" the royal Hilde sighed.

"Of old Sir Wat the warriors with broken bucklers ride."

The gray-bearded champion was eagerly asked by all how it fared with the king and their friends.

Then Wat of Sturm-land answered: "My queen, I cannot feign,

Nor yet will I deceive you; the men have all been slain."

Heart-rending was the grief of Hilde for the death of her husband and the captivity of her daughter; but too few of the Hegelings were left to think of immediate revenge.

Then spoke old Wat, the hero: "It never can befall,  
Before this country's children have grown to manhood all."

The knights departed, each into his own country and castle, and their minds were filled with the thought of regaining Gudrun and avenging their distress on the Normans.

In the meantime the Normans had fared on their voyage home, and soon came in sight of their country

and of the royal castle. From that time a long period of intense suffering began for Gudrun, who bore it with patient endurance, ever mindful of her word pledged to Herwig.

When Ludwig saw delighted his towers and castles there,  
Then spoke the Norman ruler to royal Gudrun fair :  
"Behold the castles, maiden. You may enjoy great pleasures ;  
If you to us are gracious, you'll have rich lands and  
treasures."

Then said the noble maiden, with sorrow deep and drear :  
"To whom could I be gracious ? From graciousness I fear  
I have, alas ! been parted so far that naught can sever  
Me now from my misfortunes. With grief I'll pine forever."

To her replied King Ludwig : "Leave off your pain and grief ;  
Bestow your love on Hartmut, the peerless knight and chief.  
With all our rich possessions you shall be well requited ;  
You may with that great hero be honored and delighted."

"Leave me in peace, I pray you," Queen Hilde's daughter  
said.

"Before I'd take Sir Hartmut — I rather would be dead."

Gudrun futhermore alluded to Ludwig's former condition as a vassal of King Hagen, her maternal grandfather.

King Ludwig heard with anger her speech and her design ;  
Then by the hair he seized her and flung her in the brine.

Hartmut swiftly sprang into the waves, caught her by her golden locks, and tenderly placed her in the ship.

He said : "Why would you drown her who is to be my wife,  
The fair and charming Gudrun ? I love her as my life.  
Another than my father, if he had shown such daring,  
Would lose his life and honor from wrath of mine unsparing."

But Ludwig him gave answer : " I have without a stain  
Attained old age, and therefore in future too would fain  
Live so with all mine honor; until my life is ended.  
Pray Gudrun, that I never be through her ire offended."

Messengers were sent to Gerlind, Ludwig's wife and Hartmut's mother, to apprise her of the arrival of the Normans. Gerlind and her daughter Ortrun, followed by a great train of ladies and knights, went to meet their friends and Gudrun at the shore. Ortrun and Gudrun kissed each other; but when Gerlind drew near, ready to embrace Gudrun, the latter indignantly repelled her. The fair princess rightly surmised that Gerlind was the chief cause of her misfortune, as she had instigated her son to carry Gudrun away by force.

Gudrun was taken to a castle; and as she still persisted in her love of Herwig, and scorned the thought of marrying Hartmut, the latter left her to the care of his mother, beseeching her to treat the royal captive gently, and departed on some warlike enterprise. Gerlind, seeing that kindness was of no avail, commanded Gudrun to be separated from her maidens, and forced her to do work unbecoming a queen or a lady. In the same manner she treated Gudrun's maidens, who were compelled to spin flax and weave it into linen, or to do housework ill suited to their rank. After three years and a half Hartmut returned home from the war, and bitterly upbraided his mother for her harsh treatment of Gudrun. Gerlind promised to use her more gently; but in reality she was more cruel than ever, forcing the fair and meek lady

to heat the stove, and dust the room with her long golden hair. Yet Gudrun submitted to all with untiring patience, and always thought with many tears of her mother Hilde. She never wavered in her fidelity to Herwig, whether Hartmut begged or threatened or Ortrun treated her with sisterly kindness.

At length Hartmut, as all proved of no avail, grew furious, and left Gudrun entirely to the mercy of his mother, who forced her to go down to the beach and wash for her and the court. Hildburg, who was one of the maidens that were with Hagen on the griffin island and afterwards went with Hilde to Hetel's land, was now the most faithful of Gudrun's companions and gladly shared the work with her. Despite all her sufferings, Gudrun remained true to her love.

Thirteen years had passed since Gudrun was carried away from her home and made a captive in Normandy. During that time the youths in Hilde's kingdom had grown up to manhood, and the queen was now eager to send a warlike expedition against her foes. Herwig, Wat, Horant, Frut, Ortwein, and other great chiefs were summoned to Matelan with their host, and gladly departed on the long-desired campaign against Ludwig and Hartmut. On the Wülpensand the young men visited the graves of their fathers who had been slain in that memorable battle in which Hetel fell by Ludwig's hand. There the Hegelings were joined by the fleet of Siegfried of Moorland. After a stormy voyage they came in sight of the coast of Normandy, and, unperceived

by their foes, landed near a hill in the vicinity of a large forest. The arms and horses were disembarked, and Herwig and Ortwein went forth in a boat to discover where Gudrun was.

One winter day, Gudrun and Hildburg were again on the beach, being forced to wash for the cruel Gerlind, as had been their weary lot for many years past. All at once there appeared on the waves a strange bird, swimming towards them.

“Oh woe ! fair bird ! I pity thy fate,” said Hilde’s daughter,  
“That thou hast come here swimming upon this dismal water.”

The bird was a messenger sent to her by heaven, as our poet says ; yet in the earlier form of the saga it was probably a swan maiden or a mermaid, skilled in foretelling the future. The bird spoke to Gudrun in a human voice.

“Rejoice in hope,” then answered the messenger divine ;  
“Thou poor and homeless maiden, great joy shall yet be thine.

If thou wilt ask for tidings from thy dear native land,  
To comfort thee, great heaven has sent me to this strand.”

Gudrun was overcome with wonder and joy at the unexpected and most welcome news ; but her first question was, “Is Queen Hilde yet living ? She was poor Gudrun’s mother.” The bird answered all her inquiries about Hilde, Herwig, Horant, Frut, and Wat, and also spoke of the warlike host that Hilde had sent to rescue her from captivity. Thereupon the strange creature vanished, bidding her be of good

cheer, as on the following day she would meet two of her friends.

When the maidens returned to the castle in the evening, they were harshly scolded by Gerlind, because their work had not been done well and lay unheeded while they spoke with the heavenly messenger. They withdrew to their chamber to lie down on their hard beds ; nevertheless they found great consolation for all their sorrows in the glad tidings they had heard. Although there was a heavy fall of snow during the night, Gerlind forced them on the next morning to go to the beach barefooted, and in vain they asked the cruel woman, rightly called a she-wolf by our poet, to let them put on their shoes.

They then took up the garments and went upon their way.  
"May God let me," said Gudrun, "remind you of this day."  
With naked feet they waded there through the ice and snow ;  
The noble maids, all homeless, were filled with pain and woe.

They cast many a wistful glance towards the sea, hoping to espy the promised aid from their native land. All at once they perceived on the waves a little skiff and two men sitting in it, who rowed towards the shore. Gudrun and Hildburg shivered with cold, and were ashamed not only of their scanty attire but also of being seen washing by their friends ; they were about to flee, but the two knights, who were no other than Herwig and Ortwein, besought them by their maiden honor to await their approach.

It was about the season when winter's end draws nigh,  
And birds in emulation each other will outvie,



And recommence their singing as soon as March has vanished ;  
Midst snow and ice were standing the maidens, poor and  
banished.

Their locks were dashed about them by March winds furious  
blowing ;

They ever suffered, whether 't was raining or 't was snowing.

The knights were greatly astonished both at the surprising beauty of the maidens and at the harsh treatment they seemed to undergo. Ortwein asked them who was the ruler of the land that used them so ill, and if they had heard of a foray which the king had made into the land of the Hegelings by which he captured Gudrun and many of her ladies. Gudrun answered his questions, while Herwig was struck with the resemblance that the maiden bore to his bride ; but Gudrun continued —

“I am one of the maidens whom Hartmut's warlike host  
Had taken in the combat and led unto this coast.  
If you seek here for Gudrun, it will be all in vain ;  
The royal Hegling maiden is dead from grief and pain.”

When the two knights heard these tidings, their eyes were filled with tears.

As she beheld them weeping and wailing for her sake,  
The poor and homeless maiden unto those champions spake :  
“You seem to be afflicted ; so sad appears your bearing  
As were you Gudrun's kindred, ye heroes good and daring.”  
There spoke the royal Herwig : “As long as lasts my life,  
I'll mourn for her ; the maiden was to become my wife.”

Gudrun replied that she had heard of Herwig's death, and added that if he were living, he would

have rescued her. Thereupon Herwig showed her his ring of betrothal.

Then smiled with joy the lady, and said to him : " I know  
That golden ring most surely ; 't was mine long years ago.  
And now you shall behold one from my beloved one's hand,  
When I with joy was dwelling within my father's land."

Herwig, enraptured at seeing his bride, clasped her in his arms and kissed her tenderly. He intended to take her with him at once.

But Ortwein spoke, the warrior : " That never shall befall :  
Had I a hundred sisters, I'd see them dying all,  
Before in foreign country I should think of concealing  
Myself, and take from enemies a captured maid by stealing."

In vain Herwig alleged his fear that if the Normans should become aware of their presence, they might carry away Gudrun to some secret and distant place where her friends could never find her. Ortwein insisted on rescuing Gudrun together with the noble ladies who had shared her fate. Then the two knights took leave of the maidens, promising them to be on the next morning with eighty thousand men before the gates of the Norman castle.

Gudrun and Hildburg gazed with mingled joy and pain after their friends as they departed in their boat. Gudrun flung the robes belonging to Gerlind into the sea, and declared that she would no longer do such low service for the cruel queen, as two kings had kissed her. When Gerlind heard in the evening that Gudrun had thrown away the garments, she was full of rage and threatened to have her beaten with a rod

of thorns. She would have carried out her menace, if Gudrun had not dissembled her feelings and promised to marry Hartmut. The latter was at once apprised of Gudrun's desire and hastened to meet her. When he sought to embrace her, she stepped back modestly and told him that it was unbecoming a great king to kiss a poor maiden like her; but when she should be his queen, he might clasp her in his arms in the presence of the court. At Gudrun's desire warm baths were prepared for her and her ladies, and rich garments were given to all of them. In the evening they sat down with the Normans to a great feast, and Gudrun requested Hartmut to despatch a number of his knights as messengers through the whole of Normandy to invite his friends to the wedding, as she cunningly thought that in this manner the Hegelings would encounter less foes in the coming combat. After the feast was over, Gudrun was left alone with her maidens, and then she told them in secret the glad tidings which she had received; she promised at the same time a great reward to her who would first announce to her the break of day on the following morning. The maidens, filled with great joy at the approaching rescue from captivity, withdrew to their chambers.

In the meantime Herwig and Ortwein had reached the encampment of their host, and great was the wonder of their friends when they heard that the two knights had spoken with Gudrun. Their wrath was unbounded when they learned how the noble princess was kept in thrall by Gerlind; and some of Gudrun's

kindred began to weep. The old champion Wat grew angry at their effeminacy, and said, —

“If you will aid fair Gudrun from her distress so dread,  
Then you must dye the garments she washed in bloody red.”

The Hegeling warriors decided to attack the Normans at once, since further delay would prove dangerous, as the enemy might be informed of their approach and take Gudrun to some secret hiding-place. The fearless Wat declared, —

“The air is now so cheerful, so clear and calm the night;  
The moon doth shine so brightly: this gives me great delight.  
Ye valiant knights and heroes, now let us sail from here;  
We'll be at Ludwig's castle ere morning doth appear.”

They obeyed the command of Wat, and sailed quietly by moonlight before Ludwig's palace. Wat told them to refresh themselves by a short sleep and to be ready for combat at sunrise, when he was to blow three times into his great horn.

The morning star had risen upon the heavens high,  
When to the castle window a beauteous maid drew nigh,  
In order to espy there and watch the break of day,  
Whereby from royal Gudrun she would obtain rich pay.

There looked the noble maiden and saw the morning glow.  
Reflected in the water, as it might well be so,  
Were seen the shining helmets and many bucklers beaming.  
The castle was surrounded; with arms the fields were gleaming.

Gudrun was apprised of the arrival of the mighty host that had come to her rescue, and she hastened to the window.

She saw the powerful sailers all floating on the brine.  
Then spoke the royal lady: "What pain will yet be mine!  
Alas! I God-forsaken, that ever I saw life!  
Full many a dauntless hero will die to-day in strife."

At the same time the watchman from Ludwig's tower called the Normans to arms. Soon they were ready, and as the gates were thrown open the knights of Ludwig and Hartmut rode out of the castle to encounter their foes.

Now came the time for combat. The hero of Sturmland began to blow his bugle, that round about the strand  
It thirty miles resounded, through his most powerful manner.  
The Hegeling knights all hastened to join fair Hilde's banner.

Again he blew his bugle, and at the mighty blast  
By his command each champion sat in his saddle fast.  
The leaders of the army arrayed their warriors daring,  
And ne'er old knight in combat was seen of loftier bearing.

The warlike chief with puissance then blew his horn once  
more;

The billows all re-echoed, there trembled all the shore;  
The walls of Ludwig's castle well-nigh were giving way.  
Sir Horaud bore the banner of Hilde to the fray.

Of Wat all stood in terror; in silence forth they went.  
A horse was then heard neighing. High on the battlement  
King Herwig's bride was standing; full many a dauntless  
knight

Rode forth in stately fashion 'gainst Hartmut to the fight.

The combat began at once in front of the castle, from whose battlements Gudrun gazed down upon the host. The Normans fought with desperate valor, but Wat raged like a furious lion among his foes. Hartmut distinguished himself greatly by his prowess,

and wounded Ortwein and Horant. Herwig assailed King Ludwig with great rage, but was struck down by the latter and only saved from instant death by his vassals who hastened to his rescue. As soon as he recovered from his fall, his first thought was whether Gudrun had seen him overthrown by Ludwig. Ashamed of his defeat in the sight of his fair bride, he followed the fierce old Norman king, who was about to withdraw into his castle, and challenged him to combat. Ludwig turned round to face his adversary, and after a bitter fight was slain by Herwig; thus the latter revenged the death of King Hetel on the Wülpensand.

Hartmut was not aware that his father had fallen, but as he heard the Norman women in the castle crying, and as many of his men were slain, he called his knights together so that they might fight their way back. As soon as Wat perceived this, he tried to overtake them.

He came unto the gateways with all his warriors' might,  
As Hartmut meant to enter his burgh with many a knight.

On Wat and on his champions they hurled down from the  
tower

Huge stones, as if from heaven there came a thunder-shower.  
The dauntless Wat recked little who was alive or dying;  
How he could win the battle, was all that he was trying.

Hartmut's courage grew with the danger, and although he saw that the castle was surrounded on all sides and that grim Wat stood at one of the gates, he fought with undaunted valor. The Norman knights under Hartmut's command cut their way through

Wat's men, and the two hostile chiefs encountered each other in a fierce combat. In the meantime Gerlind, knowing that Ludwig had been killed, gave orders to slay Gudrun and her maidens in revenge for her husband's death. Hartmut, hearing Gudrun's cries, magnanimously prevented the foul deed by threatening to hang on the gallows any one who should hurt her or her companions.

The combat between Hartmut and Wat continued, and grew fiercer every moment; although the Norman fought with desperate prowess, Wat came very near slaying him. In this emergency Ortrun besought Gudrun, by the kindness she had ever shown her, to save her brother. Gudrun called from the castle window to Herwig to separate the two adversaries, and Herwig asked Wat to cease the contest with Hartmut, as it was Gudrun's desire.

But Wat exclaimed with anger: "Sir Herwig! hence! away! Should I obey the women? 'Tis not my will nor way.

If I should spare mine enemies, it would be my undoing: I'll not obey. His boldness Sir Hartmut shall be ruing."

As Herwig thrust himself between the two champions, Wat dealt him such a blow that he fell to the ground. His vassals bore him away, and at the same time Hartmut and eighty of his knights were made prisoners of war.

The castle, called here Kassiane, was taken by storm and plundered; the town was sacked. The fury of Wat knew no bounds; he did not even spare the children in the cradle, although Irold severely upbraided him for his barbarous conduct.

Ortrun implored Gudrun to protect her against the unrelenting foe, whereupon Gudrun, readily complying with her request, told her to stand among her maidens. Gerlind also came near and threw herself at Gudrun's feet, beseeching the fair princess to shield her from Wat and his men. The hero of Sturmland entered the castle hall where the women had assembled.

Then old Sir Wat the champion of them became aware ;  
With gnashing teeth in fury he made his entrance there.  
His ell-long beard was floating about ; his eyes were glaring.  
All stood in mortal terror of Wat's grim rage unsparing.

He seized Gerlind, although Gudrun tried to save her, and struck off her head. At Gudrun's bidding he did not harm Ortrun or any of the Norman ladies, except the duchess Hergart, whom he slew because she had forsaken Gudrun in her misery and gone over to the enemy, wedding the Norman king's cup-bearer. Besides Wat, the other vassals of Queen Hilde—among them, Frut, Irolt, Horant, and her son Ortwein,—had distinguished themselves greatly in the combat, nor were Herwig and Siegfried of Moorland second to any in valor.

Now from the bitter contest the warriors rested all.  
There came the royal Herwig into King Ludwig's hall,  
Together with his champions, their gear with blood yet  
steaming.  
Dame Gudrun well received him ; her heart with love was  
teeming.

Great joy reigned among the victorious host and the rescued maidens when they met each other.



The castle was restored to order, so that Gudrun could dwell in it, while a part of the army plundered and subdued the rest of the Norman kingdom. After they had returned from their foray, they joyfully set sail for the land of the Hegelings with Gudrun and her retinue. They also carried with them Hartmut and the other prisoners, besides a large and rich booty. Horant and Morung remained in Normandy with a strong garrison.

Queen Hilde at Matelan, having been informed by messengers of the successful issue of the campaign against the Normans, was overcome with joy as she heard that her daughter was soon to be restored to her. When the victorious army landed at Matelan, the queen left the castle and rode to the beach, where she bade a hearty welcome to her friends. Among the great number of ladies she did not at once recognize her daughter, as she had not seen her for many years, but the knight Irolt led Gudrun to her.

“My queen, this is your daughter,” Irolt began to say.

The queen drew near to Gudrun. Could any one outweigh

The joy they felt together with any wealth or treasure?

When they had kissed each other their grief was changed to  
pleasure

At Gudrun's eager request Hilde became favorably disposed towards Ortrun and embraced her. Gudrun's noble character was manifested in yet another manner, as she ceased not to supplicate her mother, till the latter consented to free Hartmut and the other captives from their bonds. The Norman prince

and his champions were then kindly received by the queen.

Thereupon came the preparations for Herwig's and Gudrun's wedding; and in order to put forever an end to the strife and hatred of the peoples that had fought so bitterly against each other, the Norman princess Ortrun was married to Ortwein, Gudrun's brother, and Hartmut wedded Hildburg, who had shared Gudrun's captivity in such a faithful manner. Herwig's sister was married to Siegfried. After the wedding-feasts of the four kings were ended, they departed with their wives into their own countries. Thus, after years of bloody warfare, peace and tranquillity were established among these wild sea-faring tribes, and joy and festivity reigned in the lands of the conquerors and of the vanquished.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF "GUDRUN."

As has been said in regard to the Nibelung story, a great national saga consists of mythical and historical elements. Yet in a poem that has been handed down to us in only one manuscript, and that as late as the beginning of the sixteenth century, it is very difficult, and in many instances well-nigh impossible, to trace out the mythical and historical relations of the saga, since evidently the original work had passed through many transformations, together with additions and omissions, before it assumed the form in which our epic appears. The nearest approach to the primitive version of the saga, or at least to that part of it which contains Hagen's war with Hetel in order to regain his daughter Hilde, is found in the Younger Edda,\* where we read the following account. King Högni (Hagen) had a daughter whose name was Hilde. King Hedin, son of Hjarrandi, made her a prisoner of war while Högni had gone to the assembly of the kings. But when he learned that war had been waged in his realm

\* p. 53.

and his daughter had been taken away, he set out with his men in search of Hedin, and learned that he had sailed northward along the coast. When Högni came to Norway, he was informed that Hedin had sailed westward. Then Högni sailed after him to the Orkneys, and when he came to the island called Haey, Hedin was there before it with his people. Hilde went to her father and offered him in Hedin's name a necklace, as reconciliation ; if he should refuse it, she said, Hedin was ready for battle, and Högni might expect no mercy from him. Högni answered his daughter harshly, and when she came back to Hedin she told him that Högni would have no reconciliation, and bade him prepare for battle. Both chiefs, full of anger, landed on the island and arrayed their hosts for combat. Then Hedin called to Högni, his father-in-law, and offered him reconciliation and much gold as atonement. But Högni answered : " Too late dost thou offer this, if thou desirest peace, for now I have drawn my sword Dainsleif, which was forged by dwarfs and must be the death of a man whenever it is drawn ; its blows never miss their aim and the wounds made by it never heal." Then said Hedin : " Thou makest boast of the sword, but not of the victory ; that I call a good sword which is faithful to its master." They began the battle which is called Hjadninga-vig (the battle of the Hjadnings), and fought the whole day, and in the evening the kings went back to their ships. But in the night Hilde went to the battle-field and by magic craft waked up all the dead that had fallen ; and on the

next day the kings went to the battle-field and fought, as did all those who had fallen the day before. Thus the battle continued day after day; and all those who fell, and all the swords that lay on the battle-field, and likewise the shields, became stone. But as soon as day appeared, all the dead arose again and fought, and all the weapons became new again. Thus, it is said in songs, the Hjadnings will continue until Ragnarok.\*

A somewhat similar account is found in the writings of the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus. Hithinus, the king of a Norwegian tribe and ally of Frotho III., the saga-renowned king of the Danes (Frut in our poem), is filled with fervent love for Hilde, the daughter of Hoginus, king of the Jutes, even before he has seen her. His love is ardently returned by the maiden. Hoginus and Hithinus depart together on predatory warfare, and the former affiances his daughter to Hithinus. Both kings pledge themselves by oath that the one who survives will avenge the death of the other. Afterwards Hithinus is falsely accused of having seduced Hilde, whereupon her father with his army attacks Hithinus, but is defeated by the latter and forced to flee to Jutland. As the peace of the land is thus disturbed, Frotho summons the two chiefs and tries to reconcile them. His endeavors are of no avail, and a single combat is to decide the fate of the two adversaries. Hoginus is of gigantic strength and overcomes his foe, but his heart is touched by

\* p. 121.

the youth and beauty of Hithinus, whose life is therefore spared by the victor. Seven years later, the battle is renewed, and both warriors slay each other near the island of Hithins-öe. But Hilde, as Saxo relates, is said to have loved her husband so ardently that in order to recommence the contest, she waked up at night the slain heroes by her magic songs.\*

Hilde was originally a mythical personage, a valkyrie; the signification of *hild* is strife, or war, which appears in many compounds of the word, as in "Bryn-hild," meaning, as has been said before, a warrior maiden clad in the byrny, or coat of mail. The primitively mythical character of the story is still seen in the account of the Younger Edda, although the valkyrie is there merely the daughter of a king. Yet one of the striking characteristics, and a very common incident in the course of development from myths to sagas, is the transformation of gods and goddesses into human beings, heroes and heroines. In fact the awakening of the slain would hardly be intelligible without the mythical background; it is the valkyrie who ever excites to battle. As to the original signification of the whole myth, nothing absolutely certain can be said. Many scholars maintain that the ever-renewed battle denotes the struggle between light and darkness, summer and winter. Yet unless there is sufficient evidence to justify such an explanation, as for instance in the Nibelung story,

\* The following remarks on the Hilde saga are mainly based on the "Inaugural Dissertation of G. L. Klee, Leipzig, 1873."

mythical interpretations of this kind must be received with some caution, since almost every saga-renowned war might in some way be explained by a solar myth. Upon the whole, the account in the Younger Edda is more in accordance with the spirit of ancient traditions than the report of Saxo. Among the nations of antiquity, the carrying away of women and especially of king's daughters has ever been a sufficient cause for the most bitter contests, and thus the story as related in the Younger Edda is in this respect in agreement with early customs. In Saxo's statement that Hithinus had seduced Hilde, who was affianced to him with her father's consent, there appears hardly ground enough for an endless war, and moreover the accusation was untrue. The author of the Younger Edda, although a Christian, is fair in the treatment of the ancient beliefs of his race, and often relates his stories according to the contents of early songs. On the other hand, Saxo pretends to give an historical color to the myths, tries to place them under the reigns of his Danish kings, and sometimes invents motives of action when he has no true understanding of the original meaning of the subject. It is probable that in the earliest version of the myth Huginus and Hithinus slay each other, and this is indeed the account of Saxo, while this incident is not mentioned in the Younger Edda. It was perhaps omitted in the latter, as it was considered a matter of course. In the ancient forms of sagas of this kind the end is generally of a tragic nature, while in the later transformations by the impress of gentler man-

ners and customs, there appears a tendency to soften the gloomy aspect of the earlier traditions, as can be seen in our epic when compared with the Northern stories. In one instance Saxo's account is of great importance and preferable to the Younger Edda. In the latter it is distinctly stated that the slain heroes continue the battle by day, while in the former it appears that the contest takes place at night, which is in accordance with the manner in which spectral combats are always described. In this connection it deserves to be noticed that the change of certain fabulous beings into stone when they are surprised by the rays of the morning sun, is a common occurrence in saga lore.

Although the myth of Hilde has become a hero-saga in Germany, there may yet be detected a faint remembrance of early mythology in our poem, as for instance in the appearance of grim Wat, who reminds us of a storm giant. The fate of Gudrun in the German epic is a repetition of that of her mother Hilde, amplified and somewhat changed, partly by the poet and partly by the influence of other sagas.

The carrying away of Hilde during her father's absence, in the Younger Edda, agrees more with the capture of Gudrun by the Normans, who are pursued by the father of the maiden and with whom he fights in the renowned battle on the Wülpensand. The saga of Hilde is, so to speak, the nucleus around which the other incidents were afterwards gathered; and it is thus not surprising that the names of the ancient heroes, as Hagen and Hetel (Hedin, Hithinus), appear



in the story of Hilde, while the chief occurrences in the old traditions, as has been indicated, are mainly in accordance with the section in our poem treating of Gudrun. The story of Hagen's childhood had no connection with the saga, but is a product of later times, probably in part the invention of the poet and partly introduced from other similar sagas. Besides the change of gods into men, there is another characteristic, which is visible in the transformation of a myth into a saga; this is the fact that in the latter the events are represented as occurring in certain localities. Yet the scene of the great battle is ascribed in the various accounts to different places. In the Younger Edda, which in all probability contains also in this respect the earliest version, it is the island Haey (high island), now called Hoy, one of the Orkney islands; while Saxo reports that the contest took place at Hithins-œe (Hedinsey), an island situated at the west of Rügen and now named Hiddensee. In Germany the scene of action was supposed to be the Wülpensand or Wülpenwert, near the western mouth of the Scheldt. The earliest evidence of the existence of the saga on German soil is found in Lamprecht's poem "Alexander," which belongs to the first half of the twelfth century. The poet, describing the battle between Alexander and the Persians, compares it with the great war on the Wülpensand. It is proved by documentary evidences of the years 1167 and 1190, that there was a place called Vulpa or Wulpen, near the western mouth of the Scheldt, and it appears on maps of the Middle Ages. In

Lamprecht's allusion to the great battle the fight was for Hilde and not for Gudrun, and thus the saga with which Lamprecht was acquainted agreed in this respect with the Northern accounts. The poet refers to the war for the sake of Hilde as to something very well known, yet he mentions in his brief allusion three personages, Wat, Herwig, and Wolfwin,\* who do not occur in the Northern sagas, and seem to have been introduced afterwards in Germany. It appears therefore most probable that the saga in this form was known in the regions of the Lower Rhine, the home of Lamprecht's "Alexander," and near the Scheldt, as early as the beginning of the eleventh century.

A very few traces of the existence of the saga in England are to be found in Anglo-Saxon poetry, especially in "Deórs Lament," supposed to be of the eighth century. It contains a reference to Horant as the minstrel of the Heodenings (the Northern Hjadnings and the people of Hetel in the German epic). Thus Horant's minstrelsy, so much celebrated in the German epic, was known even in some of the earlier forms of the saga. According to Dr. Klee, there is no doubt that Horant, the northern Hjarandi, father of Hedin, was originally Odin himself, as appears from the etymology of the name,† taken in connection with the epithet given to Odin and the fact that the latter was also the god of song. In the later transformations of the story, Horant

\* Identical with Ortwin, Gudrun's brother.

† Cf. Dr. Klee, p. iv.

became the vassal of Hetel (Hedin). His fame was widely spread and he was one of the most popular heroes. In the German poem "Salman und Morolt," a work belonging to the twelfth century, three things are represented as the most desirable in the world; these are Salomon's wisdom, Absalon's beauty, and Horant's sweet song. Also poets of the thirteenth century mention the famous minstrel, and in the "Wartburg Krieg" Wolfram von Eschenbach is said to have appeared there, like Horant before Queen Hilde. This is certainly a reference to the scene when Horant sings before the royal maiden.

The Hilde saga came probably to the shores of Scotland and England from the Orkney islands. Not far from the latter, on the Shetland island Fula or Fowl, the story of Hilde existed as late as the end of the eighteenth century, and had retained many traces of its early origin. It was preserved in the form of a ballad, and written down by a Scotchman, named Low, to whom a Norse peasant had dictated the poem. In 1808 it appeared in print in Barry's "History of the Orkney Islands." The language of this Shetland ballad is not intelligible throughout, but it certainly contains a version of the Hilde saga. The Norse peasant, mentioned above, communicated to Mr. Low the contents of the ballad, which was translated by the well-known scholar, P. E. Munch, and reads as follows.

Hiluge, a nobleman at the court of Norway, wooed the king's daughter Hildina. She rejected his homage, although her father was well disposed towards

him. Once after the king and Hiluge had departed on a warlike expedition, the Earl of Orkney landed in Norway. He was seized with ardent love for Hildina, who returned his affection. Soon after they fled together to the Orkney islands. When the king and Hiluge returned from their war, they followed the earl to revenge the insult of the stranger. Hildina persuaded her lover to meet her father and ask his pardon; the king was touched by the earl's entreaties, and gave his consent to the marriage. But hardly had the earl departed to apprise Hildina of his success, when Hiluge, upbraiding the stranger for his insolence, aroused the king's wrath again, and induced him to take back his promise. A combat took place between Hiluge and the earl, and the latter was slain. Hiluge, with scornful words, threw the head of his adversary before the feet of Hildina, who in her inmost heart vowed to wreak bloody vengeance. She was forced to follow Hiluge to Norway, and at last, yielding to her father's urgent requests, she promised to marry Hiluge if she would be allowed to pour out the wine into the goblets at the wedding-feast. When all the guests were at table, Hildina gave them wine mingled with herbs, that put them into a heavy sleep. Then she caused her father to be carried out of the hall, and afterwards set fire to the house. All were burned; and as Hiluge, who awoke at the crackling of the flames, asked Hildina's pardon, she spoke to him as harshly as he had done when he threw the earl's head at her feet. Hiluge died in the glowing fire.

Dr. Klee says: "The grand tragedy of this action makes us again regret the unintelligibility of the poem. . . . The greatest deviation from the older saga is caused by the introduction of a rival, Hiluge. We see the same process performed in the German Gudrun saga, and this fact suggests a connection between the two versions. The late tradition of the Shetland ballad can be no reason against this assumption; the songs of Farøe were written down only in 1817, and it is natural that in regions so remote as the Shetland islands, antique features should be preserved longest in a pure form. Although it may be asserted that the idea of introducing a rival is so simple and self-evident that it may have been carried out independently in the North and in Germany, nevertheless that introduction can possibly have taken place in some versions, as the echo of which the Orkney\* ballad appears, before the saga was transferred to Germany. Also the other important deviations, especially the fact that in the Shetland ballad the beloved suitor carries away the maiden, and the latter hates his rival, while the case is reversed in 'Gudrun,' are no conclusive evidence against this theory. What extraordinary deviations are met with, for instance, in the treatment of the end of the Nibelung saga, in the Edda, and in the Nibelungen Lied!"

The ancient character and truly popular type of the Shetland ballad form a striking contrast to an Icelandic saga which is of much earlier date than the former. This is the so-called *Sörla thattr*,†

\* Shetland.

† *Thattr* means a brief story.

belonging to the fourteenth or perhaps the thirteenth century. It contains a version of the Hilde story, but in a greatly disfigured shape. This change can be accounted for by the prevailing tendency in the saga to place the ancient religion of Odin in a most disadvantageous light, and to show the cruelty and unreasonableness of the former paganism. Whatever benefit the spread of Christianity among the common people in the Scandinavian countries may have derived from such a course, it is certain that in this manner the early sagas were made to be interpreted in a spirit that was utterly foreign to their primitive meaning. Nevertheless the *Sörla thattr* is of some importance, as, despite the tendency referred to above, a few features of the original version have remained and the work is not devoid of poetic beauty. The contents of the saga are about as follows.

Freyja, Odin's favorite, had entered into a shameful bargain with four dwarfs to obtain from them the famous necklace *men brisinga*. The transaction became known to Odin, who commanded Loki to get possession of the ornament. Through Loki's stratagem Freyja was deprived of the necklace, and Odin was determined to restore it to her only if she should excite two kings to such an enmity that they would fight with each other in battle forever. The end of the contest could not be brought about until a Christian hero should witness the combat and slay them.

King Högni had obtained great power by vanquishing Sörli called the Strong (after whom the

whole story has been named). Denmark and twenty kings obeyed the sceptre of Högni. There was another king, named Hedin, son of the mighty Hjarrandi, to whom also twenty kings were submitted. Once Hedin went into a forest and there met a beautiful woman seated on a chair. Her name was Göndul, and she inquired after his warlike deeds. He related them, and asked her if she knew a king who was his equal in power and valor. Göndul replied that she knew one, whose name was Högni, and who ruled over twenty kings and lived in Denmark. In the following spring Hedin departed with three hundred warriors on a dragon-shaped vessel, and sailed the whole summer and winter, until he arrived in Denmark. There he was well received by Högni, and when they tried their strength and skill in warlike games, it was seen that neither could overcome the other. Thereupon they pledged themselves by oath to be like brothers to each other. Högni had a daughter, named Hilde, whom he loved very much, for he had no other children. After some time Högni left his country to wage war in a distant land, and Hedin remained to guard his kingdom. As Hedin went into the forest, he met again that strange woman. She gave him to drink out of a drinking-horn, and when he had drunk, he could no longer recall the past. Then she asked him about Högni's valor as compared with his own, and as Hedin said they were of equal strength and alike in everything,\* the woman reminded him that he was

\* A contradiction to the preceding sentence.

still unwedded, while Högni had a noble queen. Hedin replied that Högni would give him his daughter Hilde if he should ask him. Göndul answered that he would lower himself in obtaining her by request, and she persuaded him to carry away Hilde by force, and throw her mother, the queen, under the ship when it was launched into the sea. Hedin, bewitched by the draught of forgetfulness, promised to do so, and no longer remembered his oath of brotherhood to Högni. He seized the queen and Hilde, while his warriors took the royal treasure. On the shore Hilde asked him what he purposed to do. When he had told her, she begged him to abstain from his endeavors; "for," she said, "if thou wilt ask my father he will give me to thee." Hedin refused to comply with her demand, and Hilde told him that he might yet be reconciled to her father, even if he should carry her away by force, but never if he should kill her mother. She had dreamed that Högni and Hedin were fighting with each other, and still greater calamities would occur. She said, "Now shall I live to bear the grief of seeing my father surrounded by perjury and witchcraft, and yet I shall not rejoice in beholding thee in misfortune." But Hedin committed the crime; and when everything was ready for departure, he went alone into the wood where he encountered Göndul. He drinks again out of the drinking-horn, and while he is asleep, she vows him and Högni and their warriors to the fate that Odin had decided upon. Hedin awoke and Göndul disappeared. Now he suddenly remembered



all and became a prey to despair. He hastened to the ship and sailed away with Hilde.

When Högni came home and learned what had passed, he set out to pursue Hedin. In the evening he always arrived at the place which Hedin had left in the morning. At last he perceived Hedin's sail, and came up to him at the island Há. Hedin saluted Högni, and declared that he had been deluded by evil witchcraft. He also was ready to give up Hilde, his warriors, and all his possessions. But Högni would not listen to any attempt at reconciliation, since Hedin had murdered the queen. Then Hedin proposed that a single combat between him and Högni should decide their quarrel, but the vassals of the kings swore that they would rather die than see their lords fight alone. They all went to the shore and began the combat, Högni distinguishing himself by his great fierceness and Hedin by consummate skill. Yet, however grievously they wounded each other, they arose again and fought as before. Hilde sat in a grove and looked at the game. This contest is said to have lasted one hundred and forty-three years, until Olaf Tryggvason became king of Norway.

In the first year of his reign Olaf landed on the island Há. It happened there that the guards disappeared every night, and no one knew what became of them. One night Ivar Ljómi mounted guard. When all were asleep on the ship, he put on his armor, drew his sword, and went to the island. There a tall, blood-dripping man with sad countenance came towards him. He called himself Hedin,

son of Hjarrandi, and said that he and Högni were the cause of the disappearance of the guards. For many generations they had been compelled to fight day and night. This was the destiny imposed upon them by Odin; but if a Christian hero should fight with them, none of those who were slain by him would arise again. At Hedin's request Ivar went with him to redeem them from their fate. Hedin advised him not to attack Högni in front, for he had the helmet of terror, nor to fight with him (Hedin) until he had slain Högni, since no man could kill Högni if he (Hedin) was dead before him. They went to the battle-field, and Högni was assailed by Hedin in front, while Ivar struck him over his head from behind. Högni fell to the ground and died. Then Ivar easily killed the others and at last Hedin. On the following morning he related everything to the king. They went to the battle-field, but there every trace of the combat had vanished. Yet the blood on Ivar's sword showed that he had spoken the truth, and no guard has since disappeared. Olaf afterwards returned to his kingdom.\*

As has been said above, the tendency to contrast Teutonic paganism with Christianity has greatly influenced the saga. The belief that such terrible woes were inflicted on so many brave and guiltless heroes on account of a disgraceful occurrence among the gods could create only horror at, and disgust with,

\*. The saga is given in full in "Three Northern Love-Stories, and other Tales, translated from the Icelandic by Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris."

the former religion. Among the ancient characteristics of the story, we may mention the fierceness of Högni, the oath of brotherhood between him and Hedin, the scene of battle on the Orkney island Há (Haey), and the report that Hilde sat in a grove and looked at the game; which reminds us of the "game of Hilde," the poetical term for battle used by the scalds. Of course, with the visible tendency of the saga, the former conclusion that the contest lasted till Ragnarok was no longer possible. Uhland, quoted by Dr. Klee, says: "The Odinic battle-storm cedes to the message of Christianity, to the teaching of peace and reconciliation. But when Ivar brings about the repose of the spectral combatants only by his sword, this feature is fully in accordance with the manner of his king and master, who also by violent means opened the path for the religion of peace."

Even at the present day the Hilde saga has not become entirely extinct. There is a popular lay which is still sung with many variations in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and the contents of which in the Swedish version are as follows. Hilla sits in her chamber and weeps. When this is reported to the queen, the latter asks her for the cause of her sorrow. Hilla relates that she is a king's daughter, and had been happy until she eloped with Duke Hillebrand. On their flight Hillebrand, overcome with fatigue, intended to sleep a while, but soon her father with her brothers arrived. Hillebrand besought Hilla not to call out his name during

the combat. Then he slew her father, and all her brothers, save the youngest. When he was about to kill the latter too, Hilla, forgetting her promise, invoked his mercy and called him by his name. As soon as she had uttered the name Hillebrand, her lover fell to the ground and died. Hilla went home to her mother with her youngest brother. To punish her, she was sold for a church bell; but at the first sound of the bell, her mother's heart broke. Thus related Hilla, and when she had ended her story, she fell down dead before the queen.

We may now turn to a brief consideration of the saga in Germany. As we have seen before, the Wülpensand or Wülpenwert, the scene of the great battle in the German traditions, was at the western mouth of the Scheldt. The latter, according to Jacob Grimm,\* was formerly called Hedensee, Heidensee, which is probably the same as Hedinsey, Hithins-öe, and this name may possibly have led to the connection of the saga with the place. From the mouths of the Scheldt, and the regions of the Lower Rhine, the saga extended eastward along the shores of the North Sea, as far as Holstein. Between the Netherlands and the cities along the Rhine there was a lively interchange of ideas and culture fostered by a flourishing commerce and by wandering minstrels. Through the latter the saga was brought farther into the interior of Germany, until at last in its course from the northwest it reached the southeast. There, in Austria and perhaps in Styria, is the home of the poem

\* Haupt's Zeitschrift, ii. 4.

Gudrun. Reference has been made to Lamprecht's "Alexander," alluding to the battle on the Wülpenwert. The passage has been interpreted in different ways, but its meaning is, undoubtedly, that Hagen fought against Wat for Hilde, while Herwig and Wolfwin (Ortwin) took part in the contest. In our epic there appears, besides Hilde, another heroine, Gudrun, whose story is given in a manner somewhat similar, yet much more elaborate than that of the former. It is possible that after the saga was known in North-western Germany it was preserved in some parts in a comparatively pure form, while in others it was embellished and amplified. Both versions were afterwards connected in such a way as to make Hilde of the early and simple saga the mother of the heroine in the more complicated form. The germs for the formation of two separate stories are already found in the saga, as it appeared, according to Lamprecht's report, in the regions of the Lower Rhine. Hagen and Hilde were assigned to the first story, while Herwig and Wolfwin (Ortwin) and the scene of battle were incorporated in the second story, and Wat remained in both. The separation of the heroine into two forms had not then been brought about in the version of the Lower Rhine, and the latter may be considered as forming the point of transition from the Northern sagas to the later German traditions, as they appear in the poem Gudrun. The name Gudrun probably belonged to Hilde from the beginning. This opinion is strengthened by the contents of a stanza in the Högni song of Faroë, which Dr. Klee

has pointed out. Högni of the Sigurd or Nibelung saga distinguishes himself by his great bravery; he slays a hundred and fifty men at every blow, and then the poet says, —

Tað var Guðrun Júkadóttir, heldur at ti gaman,  
Meira ið Högni höggur sundir, meira renna teir saman.  
Tað var Högni Júkason, hann gav ti fullvael gaetur,  
Teir ið hann um dagin drepur, teir livgar hon upp um naetur.\*

The passage shows that its author confused the story of the Nibelung Högni with that of Högni of the Hilde saga. He remembered, it seems, the incident of the reawakening of the slain heroes at night from a song that belonged to the Hilde tradition where Gudrun and Högni were mentioned together. The latter, however, were not the well-known Nibelung personages, but Hilde and her father Högni. It appears that the confusion of the two sagas would not have taken place in this manner if Hilde had not also been named Gudrun in the Northern sagas. Moreover double names are not uncommon in Teutonic traditions, as we have, for instance, Brynhild-Sigdrifa; and in the Nibelung story the German Kriemhild is called Gudrun in the Northern accounts, while in the latter the former name is given to her mother. In conclusion, we may simply refer here to an episode in the Thidrek Saga which proves the existence of the Hilde story, of course with some changes, in Old Saxony, along the shores of the North Sea. With the Thidrek Saga agrees in part, especially in the name of Hilde's lover Herburt, a pas-

\* See Note 6, p. 309.

sage in the German poem "Biterolf" (6459-6511), which was composed in Styria during the first half of the thirteenth century. In the latter work we meet also with Ludwig and Hartmut, his son, of Ormanie (Normandy). Again there is little doubt that the story of Hildegund in the Latin poem of "Walther of Aquitania" is based on a version of the Hilde saga, since the principal features of both are the same.

The German epic Gudrun was composed during the last decade of the twelfth century, while it is highly probable that the saga was known in Upper Germany as early as the second half of the eleventh century.\* The poem cannot have been written much later than the period mentioned above, since Wolfram von Eschenbach in his "Titurel," which belongs to the beginning of the thirteenth century, has imitated the versification of Gudrun. The latter is itself an imitation of the Nibelung metre. The first two lines of the Gudrun stanza agree entirely in form with the corresponding lines of the Nibelung stanza, yet the third and fourth lines of the former are connected by female rhymes, i. e. the last *two* syllables of these verses agree in sound, while the last syllable is unaccented; moreover, the second hemistich of the fourth line has five accents and not four, as in the Nibelung stanza. There is a strong tendency not to suppress the unaccented syllables, which is in accordance with the somewhat lyrical character of the Gudrun stanza and in fact with that of the whole poem.

\* Müllenhoff in Haupt's Zeitschrift, XII. 313.

On the other hand there are many hemistichs in the first half of the stanza which have no ringing cæsura and must be read with four accents.\* Again it must be said that several stanzas in Gudrun agree completely with the Nibelung metre and have male rhymes. We may now give the first stanza of the poem, with the accents marked.

Ez wúohs in Írlande ein rí'cher kú'nic hê'r.

Geheizen wás er Sígebánt, sîn vátér der hiez Gê'r.

Sîn múoter díu hiez Uote, und wás ein kú'nigíune.

Dúrch ir hô'he túgende sô' gezám dem rí'chen wól ir mínne.

The translations from Gudrun which are given in this volume are in accordance with the metre of the original, but the last verse of the stanza has not been lengthened.†

The text of the manuscript‡ of our poem was first published with some emendations in Von der Hagen's "Heldenbuch in der Ursprache" (Hero-Book in the Original Language).§ Since that time much has been done towards the production of the correct text, as the manuscript, like most late manuscripts of that era, often disfigures the Middle High German language and is otherwise full of mistakes. There have also been some attempts to treat the poem like the Nibelungen Lied, and to separate the so-called genuine parts, which are based on old sagas, from the additions of later times. Ludwig Ettmüller, in his edition of Gudrun in 1841, endeavored to show

\* As, for instance, the first hemistich of the second verse in the first stanza of the poem.

† See Note 7, p. 309.

‡ p. 159.

§ Berlin, 1825.



the interpolations made by four different persons, and to distinguish them from each other. He divided the whole work into three epics, — “Hagene,” “Hagene und Hetel,” and “Gudrun,” — and of the 1705 stanzas of the original text he rejected 951 as not genuine. Karl Müllenhoff was not satisfied with this work, as the reasons for what was considered genuine and what was rejected were either not given at all or were presented in the preface in a general way without any conclusive proof. Wilhelm Grimm had given a course of lectures on Gudrun in Berlin in 1841, and Müllenhoff, although he had before paid attention to the poem, was induced particularly by Grimm’s remarks to devote his labors to investigations on Gudrun. In 1845 he published “Kudrun, die echten Theile des Gedichtes, mit einer kritischen Einleitung” (The Genuine Parts of the Poem of Kudrun, with a Critical Introduction), a work which shows his great erudition and independence of judgment. Müllenhoff retained of the 1705 stanzas only 414 as genuine; he omitted the first section of the poem, treating of Hagen’s youth, and divided the story of Hagen and Hetel into seven parts, and that of Gudrun into eighteen. In regard to the interpolators Müllenhoff says, on page 42: “No one ought to have ventured to determine precisely the number of persons who worked on the poem, and to attribute stanza after stanza to this one or that one; in particular cases it is even difficult to say what is earlier or later.” Generally speaking, those who adhered to Lachmann’s theory of the Nibelungen

Lied accepted also Müllenhoff's view of Gudrun, while those who differed from them agreed upon the whole with the opinion of Karl Bartsch, who deserves great praise for his zeal in the investigations of our poem. Bartsch rejects the idea that one or several interpolators composed parts of the epic, but he admits that the whole work was revised or remodelled by a poet, as far as its form is concerned, about the year 1215.\* The manuscript which we possess is copied from that revised edition. However valuable have been the researches of the scholars named above and those of others not mentioned here, it is impossible to state with absolute certainty in what particular manner the composition of our poem was carried out.

Great changes in the saga were necessarily introduced by the transformation of Hilde and the heroes of old, who primitively were mythical personages, into Christian characters of the Middle Ages, as we have seen in some of the sagas and stories that have been sketched on the preceding pages. There is little doubt that even the popular lays, based on the ancient material, were in time affected by the same influences. It is certain that the mediæval poets, in accordance with the customary ideas of their time, depicted the events of other epochs, whether of classical antiquity or biblical history, in the garb of their own era. It is not surprising that they did the same in regard to old German traditions. Thus, in agreement with the taste and demands of that part

\* Germania, X. 160.

of mediæval society on whose generosity the wandering minstrels had to depend, the ancient heroes and heroines became in our poem, respectively, Christian kings or knights and king's daughters. The whole epic was permeated by the spirit of mediæval chivalry, although there are still some traces which betoken the original source from which the tale was derived. It underwent in this respect a transformation similar to that of the Nibelung traditions, when they appeared in the shape of the great epic which has been the subject of the first five chapters.

The occurrences in the first section of the poem are not based on ancient German sagas. The story of the Griffin is of foreign origin, but the author of Gudrun may have become acquainted with it through the saga of "Herzog Ernst" (Duke Ernest), of which a German version existed about the year 1180, and which became very popular. On the other hand, this section is partly given by the composer of the epic in imitation of the manner of the court poets, who, as we see in "Parzival" and "Tristan," relate the life of the hero's or heroine's progenitors before they begin the principal story. The fact that Hagen's wife is called a princess from India, and Siegfried a king of the Moors (Môrlant),\* together with other assertions of this kind, is due to the love of strange adventures in distant countries which characterized this period of the Middle Ages, and which was fostered by the influence of the crusades on the imagination of the people. In regard to the situation of the

\* p. 170.

different countries and places in our epic no very certain explanations can be given. We have above referred to Vulpa or Wulpen, as a place attested by documentary evidence.\* The same proof is furnished for Cadsant or Cassant; the latter is a small place at the southwest from Wulpen, and is still existing. It has been supposed that this might be the Norman Kassiane,† the castle of Ludwig and Hartmut. Against this supposition the objection has been raised that it would then seem improbable that the Hegelings could not have pursued the Normans.‡ Yet the conceptions of the geographical position of Kassiane or Cassant may easily have been lost in the saga during its long course from the northwest to the southeast of Germany, and only to the latter, the home of the author of Gudrun, belongs the statement that the Normans could not be overtaken. In earlier traditions the Normans were not the inhabitants of French Normandy, but Northmen from Norway and Denmark, who about the end of the eighth century began to harass the coasts on the North Sea. During a part of the ninth century Danes had settled at the mouths of the Lower Rhine and in Friesland. Therefore in the saga Rhenish and Friesian regions could afterwards be taken for Northern countries, and the latter for the former, so that there is in Gudrun a Rhenish Denmark (Teneland), and German heroes have become Danes.§ Yet, as has been said above, besides the general fact that the German traditions

\* p. 197.

† p. 187.

‡ p. 175.

§ Müllenhoff, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, VI. 64.

indicate the country near the mouths of the Scheldt and the Rhine and along the coast of the North Sea as the place of the events, no definite or very trustworthy geographical statements can be given. Dr. Klee is perfectly right when he says that the poet had before him no special map of Flanders and Friesland. Gudrun is an epic, the outgrowth of old sagas, and not a history. Whatever historical events, if any, may have become mingled with tradition, cannot be determined.

Our poem, when compared with the Nibelungen Lied, leaves upon the whole a more cheerful impression on the mind and soul of the reader. There is "joy after sorrow," and not "sorrow after joy," in the end. It is true that in Gudrun we meet with a great deal of bloodshed and with the chief heroine's desolate destiny, yet the conclusion of the poem makes us forget the scenes of slaughter and cruelty of former days and rejoice in the happy aspect of the blooming present and future. To read our epic will convey a much better idea of its beauties than any comments can do; yet there is no metrical translation of it in English. However, there exists an anonymous prose version, published in Edinburgh in 1860, which is somewhat free in its rendering of the story, but is charmingly written. It is hoped that the brief sketch given in the preceding chapter, together with the translations, will call the attention of lovers of poetry to this great epic. Gudrun is undeservedly not enough known, while it is inferior only to the Nibelungen Lied. Yet there are some scenes and pas-

sages in Gudrun which are not surpassed by those in any other poem. It has been dramatized by Victor von Strauss, and rendered into modern German by San Marte (Schulz) in a readable manner, but not strictly conforming to the original. It has been translated by Simrock, Keller, and Baumeister in the correct metre.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PARZIVAL.

#### I. SKETCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTHUR SAGA, AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL. — II. OUTLINE OF THE POEM.

I. AMONG the poems of Mediæval Germany which are not the outgrowth of the early national traditions,\* but distinctly the work of individual poets, the great epic *Parzival* (Percival) by Wolfram von Eschenbach is justly deemed the most renowned. The title of the poem calls to our mind at once the fair and famous pictures of Guinevere, Elaine, Arthur and the Round Table, Lancelot and the Holy Grail, immortalized in Tennyson's "*Idylls of the King*." Yet in order to understand and appreciate Wolfram's epic, it will be necessary first to cast a glance at the story of Arthur and the Round Table, and to consider it by itself, since the legend of the Holy Grail had originally no connection with the former, and was interwoven with it only in later times. When we inquire into the origin of the story

\* pp. xi, xii.

of Arthur, we must turn towards the early records of the Keltic nation,—a nation whose glory belongs chiefly to the past,—a nation which was at the summit of its power and its fame when Brennus, the Gallic chief, entered the gates of the Eternal City and was brought face to face with the stoic patriotism of the Roman senators. Yet the haughty and cruel words of the Keltic chieftain, *Væ victis*, were destined by the terrible law of retribution to become a fatal spell to his whole people. For despite the personal bravery of the Keltic tribes, the invariable result of their wars with other nations was defeat in the end, whether they succumbed before the superior strategy of the Roman legions or yielded to the prowess of the Teutonic invaders. But while the Keltic nationality, as compared with its ancient glory, has nearly sunk into political insignificance, it has accomplished a triumph not equalled by any nation on the earth, and won in a warfare nobler than that of arms. The legends of its hero Arthur not only became famous in every castle of Europe, but exercised so potent a sway over the higher classes of society that it was the height of ambition for mediæval chivalry to carry out the idealized conception of the knighthood of the Round Table.

The first question which presents itself in regard to this subject seems to be, "Is Arthur a historic personage or is he not?" and this necessarily leads us to inquire into the documents of the early Keltic population of England. It is a work of some difficulty, since the ancient records of the Keltic race



exhibit a strange mingling of historic facts with legendary lore. It is true that the same assertion may be made concerning the Scandinavian Eddas and the German Nibelungen Lied, if we should attempt to construe from them, and from them alone, a history of the Northern or of the German people. Yet the Keltic traditions, on account of their antiquity and of our imperfect acquaintance with the language, present still greater difficulties, and much doubt exists in relation to the authenticity and genuineness of these early works. However there is sufficient reason to assume that the ancient myths and sagas of the Kelts in the course of time passed through transformations similar to those of the Teutonic tribes. But while German and more particularly Scandinavian mythology and saga-lore attained the last stage of their development, when they appeared in the form of popular tales and fairy stories, at a comparatively late epoch, the Keltic traditions reached that state at a much earlier date, since they were sooner brought into contact with Christianity and more powerfully influenced by Roman civilization. There is also no doubt that the Christian missionaries among the Keltic population of England and Gaul endeavored to adapt their doctrines somewhat to the former beliefs of the people, in the same manner as they did in Germany; and thus the old pagan gods were converted into saints or demons, and in this transformation they enriched and modified the ancient sagas. When we unfold the records of the early bards, we find that Arthur was the leader of the many

petty kings of Wales in their combats against the invading and often victorious Anglo-Saxons ; that he was a brave warrior and was murdered by his nephew and buried at Glastonbury, probably in the sixth century. This is nearly all that can be ascertained of the historic Arthur, and it must be admitted that the latter has very little in common with the Arthur of the later legends and romances. There are no documents which prove that Arthur's fame extended beyond the boundaries of Wales before the ninth century ; and even for a long time afterwards he remained simply the worshipped national hero. It is only towards the end of the eleventh century that he begins to appear in the garb of the ideal king and knight, until finally he loses all national characteristics and becomes the sublime emblem of mediæval chivalry, in few of its shadows, in all its lights. The more Keltic nationality was thrust into the background of the political theatre of Europe, the more the ancient national songs were held sacred and the deeds of the legendary heroes magnified, as if the conception of the idealized past could indemnify for the hardships of the realistic present.

Thus Arthur is depicted as residing with his beautiful queen Guinevere (Ghwenhwywar) at Caerlleon (the castle of Leon) on the Usk in Wales. They are surrounded by a glittering throng of brave knights and noble ladies. To belong to Arthur's court and sit at the Round Table was considered the highest honor that could be bestowed on any knight. Among the scenes of the Arthur legends the forest of Brezilian

(in Keltic, *Broch-allean*, the forest of solitude) is most distinguished, and it bears this name even to-day in Brittany. From King Arthur's court the knights, either single or in company, set out in quest of adventures, — for the protection of ladies in distress, or to conquer giants and vanquish oppressors or treacherous knights. At the same time the cavaliers of Arthur are models of refinement and of courtly manners, while the ladies excel in grace and beauty. The most renowned heroes in the legends of Arthur are Gawain, Percival, Lohengrin, Tristan, Iwein, Erec, Wigalois, Lancelot, and Wigamur.

It is not surprising that the legends of King Arthur and of his cavaliers became famous at an early epoch in Brittany in Gaul, among a people so closely akin to the Welsh in England and in constant and lively intercourse with them. Moreover the population of Brittany underwent trials from the Franks, and at times from the Normans, similar to those which the Welsh suffered from the Anglo-Saxons; and to this fact is due in a great measure the eagerness with which the story of Arthur was welcomed on the neighboring shores, since the glory of the kindred nation could not but reflect much of its splendor on the warlike tribes of Brittany. The latter were not content with merely receiving the legendary lore of their kinsmen, but elaborated the ancient traditions, embellished them with creations of their imagination, and transferred the scene of action in many cases to their own country. But they did even more than that, more than the Welsh were able to do; for Brit-

tany became not only, so to speak, the second home of the Arthur sagas, but it was the medium through which they were communicated, although in a form very different from their primitive source, to Northern and Southern France, and thence to Germany and the other European countries. The fact that the story of Arthur was transmitted through Brittany, and not through Wales to the rest of Europe, can be accounted for by the different relations in which the two countries stood to their neighbors.

The Welsh since the beginning of the ninth century had been losing more and more of their independence in fruitless struggles against the Anglo-Saxons, and the contempt of the latter for the former was so deep as to prevent all social relations among them. The enmity between the two nations was so intense as to exclude even the possibility that the conquerors would receive or revive the war songs of the vanquished. On the other hand, Brittany had succeeded in retaining its independence and power, and at the same time was greatly influenced by the civilization of France and especially by the spirit of French chivalry. It is evident that the story of Arthur, already much transformed before it left the soil of Brittany, must have undergone still greater changes when it became naturalized in other countries. Indeed we cannot assume that the different nations of Europe would forsake their own popular traditions and epics in order to make room for the saga-lore of another people; thus neither were the French disposed to abandon their songs of Roland,

nor the Germans their lays of the Nibelungs. Therefore we find that the more the legends of Arthur became popular among the Romanic and Germanic nations of Europe, the more they were denationalized, until at last, in the twelfth century, Arthur, originally the hero of Wales, the champion of Welsh independence against Anglo-Saxon oppression, lost all national characteristics. He became, as has been said above, merely the noblest type of mediæval chivalry, the manly representative of what was considered knightly honor and virtue during the Middle Ages. The legends of King Arthur in this new, idealistic garb were not long in finding a place side by side with the great national epics, and were eagerly welcomed at every royal court and at every castle in Europe, and this so much the more as the spirit of the nations had been roused to its highest pitch, and everything seemed to be prepared for the favorable reception of a story like that of the knights of the Round Table. Indeed the age was filled with religious and martial excitement. The chivalry of Spain, while combating against the noble Moorish warriors, had won its laurels under the great Cid. In France, the blast of Roland's bugle, which had resounded at Roncevaux, seemed to re-echo still in the heart of the French knights. In England, the fermentation caused by the clashing discord between Anglo-Saxon and Norman customs and institutions had produced an era rich in heroic sentiments and deeds. In Germany, under the famous epoch of the Hohenstaufen emperors, during which the flower of the

✓ German nobility became acquainted with the civilization of mediæval Italy, the old national songs had been revived, and the heroes of the past were held up as models for the present. Yet above all, it was the influence of the crusades, and the acquaintance with the gorgeous grandeur of the East, that predisposed the European nations to whatever was strange and adventurous; and nothing could be found more in accordance with these characteristics than the romances of Arthur and his knights.

Before concluding this brief sketch of the development of the Arthur saga, we may refer here to a collection of Welsh tales known under the title "Mabinogion," Children's or Household Stories. The work was introduced to the English-reading public by Lady Charlotte Guest, a native of Wales, who in the year 1838 published a translation of it and dedicated it very appropriately to her children.\* It is probable that the Mabinogion, in the form in which they have been transmitted to us, were written down during the latter part of the fourteenth century, yet the material from which they were composed is of an earlier date. We shall hereafter refer to the Mabinogi of Peredur, which is supposed by some to be the source of the Percival saga.† The Mabinogion represent Arthur as the ideal knight, yet they relate many grotesque and even absurd adventures, together with some points which must be considered as the relics of ancient Keltic mythology. It is hardly necessary to say that the leaders of the

\* See Note 8, p. 309.

† p. 321.

Welsh tribes who distinguished themselves under Arthur's banners underwent a similar transformation in the course of time. In fact he becomes at the end a mere spectator, and his court simply the centre of adventure-seeking knights. The latter were glorified in special poems and romances, while at the same time all of them, king and knights, were overshadowed by the splendor of the Holy Grail.

The word "Grail" is derived from the old French "graal, gréal," meaning a vessel or cup. According to a later form of the legend,\* sixty thousand angels had a crown made for Lucifer when the latter arose in rebellion against God. A precious stone had fallen from this crown when Lucifer was hurled down from heaven. From this stone came the holy dish which Christ used at the Eucharist and in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of the Saviour. Therefore great life-giving and healing powers were attributed to the Holy Grail, which became the central figure of a sort of Christian mythology, whose germs point to the faint remembrance of a former earthly paradise and to Oriental origin. According to a description found in the "Younger Titurel," the temple of the Grail was round, and one hundred fathoms in diameter. It was situated on Mont Salvage in Northern Spain, and the summit of the mountain on which it stood was of polished onyx which shone like the moon. Many years after Joseph of Arimathea had brought the holy cup into the Western countries,

\* Wartburgkrieg.

no one could be found who merited to be its guardian. At last Titurel, a fabulous king of Anjou, was directed by divine command to build on Mont Salvage a temple for the Grail, and a castle for the knights to whose care the sacred vessel was intrusted. The temple was surrounded by seventy-two chapels of an octagonal shape. There were thirty-six towers, one to every pair of chapels, and each six stories high. The roofs of the towers were of gold, with ornaments in blue enamel. On each tower stood a crystal cross, and on the latter was seen a golden eagle, spreading out its wings. The vaultings of the temple were of blue sapphire, and so were all the altar-stones. In the centre there arose a tower twice as high and large as the others, and on its summit was placed a magnificent carbuncle of enormous size, which shone far and wide, and at dark guided the knights of the Grail to the temple. On the inside of the cupola the golden sun and the silvery moon were represented in diamonds and topazes. As has been said by Vilmar and other writers, this wonderful imaginary structure reminds us of the temple of the new Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, while still more it is to be considered as a grand and glowing ideal of German architecture generally.

The saga of the Grail was introduced into Spain by the Arabs. In Wolfram's poem it is said (IX. 623) that Flegetanis, a pagan, but by his mother's side of Jewish extraction, of the race of Salomo, had first written about the Grail in pagan (Arabic) language. Yet the later exclusively Christian nature



of the Grail is evident from Wolfram's remark that Flegetanis possessed no right understanding of the sacred cup, and therefore could speak only timidly of what he had read about it in the stars, since Christian baptism was required to perceive the mysteries of the Holy Grail. The book of Flegetanis, treating of the Grail, is said to have been found in Toledo, Spain, by Guiot (Kiot), a Provençal poet, who is presumed to have composed from it and from the chronicle of the house of Anjou, as well as from the living traditions of his time, a poem which became the principal but not the entire source of Wolfram's epic. Although we should expect that Guiot would write in his native idiom, in the *langue d'oc*, according to Wolfram he spoke of the Grail in French. Guiot's poem, if it ever existed, is lost, and we can therefore not compare Wolfram's epic with his supposed main source. Simrock thinks that "Wolfram's sharply marked personality appears everywhere in the most definite manner, every line breathes his spirit, and the great number of highly individual effusions, as well as the allusions to German conditions and German saga, exclude the idea of real translation." In this connection we must refer to Chrétien de Troyes, who wrote the "Conte del Graal" about the year 1170. His poem is not complete, as it ends before Percival had arrived for the second time at the castle of the Grail. Wolfram mentions the work of Chrétien, but accuses him of not having transmitted the saga correctly.

The care of the Holy Grail was intrusted to a king

and a select number of knights, who were called *templeise* (guardians of the temple) from the Mediæval Latin word *templensis*. The castle of the Grail was situated, according to most traditions, in the northern part of Spain. It stood, as has been said above, on Mont Salvage (the mountain of Salvation),\* which was surrounded by a territory belonging to it, named Terre de Salvage, in which was the Fontaine de Salvage. The knights of the Grail had to excel in every virtue, and practise chiefly chastity and humility. Their king alone was allowed to marry, while they had to abstain from all earthly love. There is little doubt that the general organization of the knight-hood guarding the Holy Grail was conceived after that of the Knights Templars, who wielded great influence during the latter part of the twelfth century in Southern France and Northeastern Spain. The first house of the Knights Templars was established in the Pyrenees as early as 1136 by Roger III., Count of Foix. There were also a few points of a strange ceremony, common to both orders. The wholly spiritual chivalry of the Grail could not be imagined without easily leading to the idea of its counterpart. The latter was found in the legends of King Arthur and the Round Table, representing the highest ideal of worldly knighthood. The combination of the two originally distinct saga-cycles and the unification of the various forms which the Arthur stories had taken in different countries, were particu-

\* *Salvage* is also connected by some with *sauvage*; thus, Mont Salvage would mean "wild mountain."

larly favored by the reign of Henry II. of England, of the house of Anjou (1154-89), who united under his sceptre the crowns of England, Normandy, Anjou, and a great part of Southern France. Wolfram represents in his poem the fabulous kings of the Grail as connected with the house of Anjou; and in this he is supposed to follow Guiot, who is said to have intended to glorify the Anjevin dynasty. The idea of placing the knighthood of the Grail and that of Arthur, if not in a hostile, yet in a morally different position from each other, is found, at least in its germ, in the French poems, as can be seen in the work of Chrétien.

Besides the spiritual knighthood of the Holy Grail and the worldly chivalry of the Round Table, another prominent element appears in our poem; it is the dark principle of evil and destruction. Thus while the knights of the Grail lead a holy life and exert their personal valor only for the glory of God; and while, on the other hand, the cavaliers of Arthur's court are intent merely on worldly fame and on the satisfaction of their ambition, and they and their ladies indulge in joys and pleasure, — there plans the evil spirit in the person of the sorcerer Klinschor, from his castle called Château Merveilleux, destruction for both the spiritual and the worldly chivalry.

After these preliminary remarks on the leading characteristics of our poem, we may now cast a glance at its details. Wolfram's epic has often and rightly been called a psychological epic, to be compared with Goethe's Faust, a psychological drama. It is true that

Wolfram took the materials for his poem from well-known traditions, yet he arranged the confused mass of legendary lore in a more symmetrical form than his predecessors had done,\* and imbued it to a great extent with a spirit and an originality entirely his own. Thus our epic is not merely a romantic tale, delighting the imagination by the variety and strangeness of its incidents, but it is at the same time an exponent of the great questions which always have agitated the human mind. To Percival as well as to Faust may be applied the words, "Es irrt der Mensch, so lang er strebt." Percival is the representative of the sinful man who, trusting to his own powers, despairs of God and himself, and obtains the heavenly kingdom only by repentance and humility.

II. The poem is divided into sixteen books; the first book opens with an introduction in which faith in God and honorable conduct towards men are contrasted with the final doom reserved for those whose soul is filled with doubt and perfidy. Then, after extolling the merits of true womanhood in preference to the beauty of mere personal charms, the poet announces that he will relate a tale of love and sorrow, and begins by describing the adventures of Percival's father, which are given at some length in the first two books, while the story of Percival himself opens only with the third book.

\* However, it must be said that already Chrétien had separated the saga of Percival from the rest, and also introduced the episode of Gawain's adventures during Percival's despair.

Gahmuret, a younger son of the King of Anjou, leaves his country after the death of his father, as he will not remain with his elder brother, on whom the crown had devolved. After various adventures in the service of the Caliph of Bagdad, he is driven by a storm to the shores of Zazamanc, in the land of the Moors, whose queen Belakane is falsely accused of having caused the death of her suitor Eisenhart. Her city is therefore besieged by the latter's friends and relatives, both Moors and Christians. Gahmuret defeats in combat the leaders of the besieging armies, and marries the queen, who, in spite of her dark color, was renowned for her great beauty. Yet, urged by an irresistible desire for new adventures and Christian countries, he soon abandons his wife and stealthily embarks for Sevilla, not, however, without leaving a letter for the queen, in which he tells her his descent and the cause of his departure. Afterward Belakane gives birth to a son, who is black and white spotted, and who is named Feirefls (son of a fairy). The beautiful Moorish queen, of whom our poet has drawn a most charming picture in a few masterly strokes, is a noble type both of a faithful wife and a loving mother. Her love is depicted in a touching manner when she kisses the white spots on the skin of her child, as they remind her of the absent Gahmuret. The latter, after having passed through Sevilla and Toledo, comes to Kanvoleis, where Herze-loide, queen of Waleis (Valois), had made preparations for a great tournament, and promised her hand and crown to the victor. Gahmuret carries away the

palm of victory, yet his heart is full of sadness and tormented by the most contradictory feelings. During the combat, messengers had arrived from the Queen of France, who informs him of her husband's death, and reminds him of his former love for her. At the same time he is haunted by the recollection of the faithlessly forsaken Moorish queen, while he admires the radiant beauty of Herzeloide, who proffers her love to him. He is saddened by the tidings of his brother's death, and passes the night overcome with grief. On the following morning Gahmuret is compelled by the terms of the tournament to espouse Herzeloide, with whom he lives a happy life until he joins again the army of the Caliph of Bagdad and meets his death by treachery. Shortly afterwards Herzeloide gives birth to Percival, the hero of our poem, the step-brother of Feirefils.

The child her falling tears bedew;  
No wife was ever found more true.  
She teemed with joy and uttered sighs;  
And tears midst laughter filled her eyes.  
Her heart delighted in his birth;  
In sorrow deep was drowned her mirth.

Herzeloide, overwhelmed by grief for her husband's death, and fearing that a similar fate might sometime befall her beloved child, withdraws into the lonely forest of Soltane. There she brings up Percival in the greatest simplicity of mind, far away from all contact with the world, and studiously seeks to keep him in total ignorance of everything pertaining to chivalry. In childish sport he carves a bow and

arrows with which he shoots the birds ; but he bursts into tears when he perceives that they sing no more. He abstains from shooting them, he loves to lie under the trees and listen to their sweet songs. A strange feeling permeates his heart, and he runs weeping to his mother ; the latter asks him for the cause of his grief.

He cannot tell her ; naught he says.

'Tis so with children now-a-days.

Herzeloide causes the birds to be killed, as they made him sad, but he begs for their life. She kisses him and exclaims, "Why should I break the command of God and disturb the peace of the birds?" Percival at once asked her, "What is God?" His mother answers, "He is brighter than daylight; yet once he took the form and face of man. Pray to him in need, but beware of the fiend, the faithless one, and of wavering doubt." His mother's efforts to guard him against the dangers of chivalry are frustrated by the mere appearance of some knights in glittering armor, whom the youth happens to meet in the forest and whom he takes, in the simplicity of his imagination, for divine beings. Percival, when apprised of his error, expresses a wish to obtain the honors of chivalry, whereupon one of the knights tells him to go to the court of King Arthur. He went to his mother and said, —

"I saw four men, dear mother mine ;  
Not brighter is the Lord divine.  
They spoke to me of chivalry ;  
Through Arthur's power of royalty,

In knightly honor well arrayed,  
I shall receive the accolade."

Herzeloide is sorely grieved at what Percival said, but she cannot resist his eager desire to depart in quest of adventures. In order that he may return to her soon and unharmed, she has him dressed in fools' clothes with a fool's cap on his head. On the night before his departure she bestows on him many well-meant words of advice, which he afterwards interprets too literally, and is therefore brought into some awkward situations. On the following morning Percival leaves his mother, and when he disappears from her view, she falls to the ground and dies broken-hearted. Soon he comes to a tent where he perceives Jeschute, the wife of Duke Orilus de Lalander; and, misunderstanding his mother's advice, he embraces the lady and takes her ring from her. Then he departs, and the duke arrives, who heaps bitter reproaches on his innocent wife, ill treats her, and vows to take fierce vengeance on the stranger. In the forest of Brezilian Percival meets a lady, called Sigune, who with loud crying bewails the fate of her lover, who lies dead in her arms, having been slain in a duel. Percival offers to avenge his death, and Sigune, moved by the charms of his youthful innocence, asks him his name. When he replies in a touching manner, "Bon fils, cher fils, beau fils, I always have been called," Sigune knows who he is, and tells him his name and parentage. After leaving her, he comes near the city of Nantes in Brittany, and meets Ither, who was called the Red Knight, as he was clad in



red armor. Ither, claiming the crown of Brittany, has, as a token of his pretensions, snatched a golden goblet from the Round Table, and requests Percival to bear for him a defying message to the knights of King Arthur. When Percival arrives at the royal residence in Nantes, Arthur and his whole court are astonished at the strange attire of the youth, while they cannot help admiring his great beauty. Percival in his childlike manner asks at once of Arthur to confer on him the honors of chivalry and to let him have the armor of the Red Knight. While the king reluctantly grants his request, as he fears that Percival will be slain, the latter mounts his horse and rides away. Queen Guinevere with her knights and ladies went to the window to see him depart ; one of the noble ladies, the beautiful Kunnevere, who had vowed not to laugh until she had seen him on whom the highest honors should be bestowed, bursts out laughing at the sight of Percival and is therefore severely punished by Sir Kai, the seneschal. Antanor, who was pledged not to speak until Kunnevere should laugh, breaks his silence.\* Percival, beholding the wrong that Kunnevere had suffered on his account, is determined to wreak vengeance on Sir Kai hereafter. Now he meets again the Red Knight, asks of him his horse and armor, and, as Ither strikes him with the shaft of his spear, hurls his javelin at the head of his adversary. Ither falls dead to

\* The incidents of not laughing or not speaking are of frequent occurrence in early stories of this kind ; cf. also the Mabinogi of Peredur, p. 311.

the ground. Percival turns about the body of the dead man without being able to take off his armor. The young Iwanet, who before on Percival's arrival at Arthur's residence had been very courteous towards the youthful hero, aids him now in putting on Ither's armor and gives him some advice in regard to the use of the sword and spear. Percival sends back the golden goblet to Arthur, and threatens vengeance to Sir Kai. He rides forward, and is henceforth himself called the Red Knight. Afterwards he comes to the castle of an old knight, named Gurnemanz, who receives him very kindly, but is greatly astonished when the fools' clothes appear under the red armor. He instructs him in knightly warfare and in everything relating to chivalry; he also lays down for him some rules of conduct, among others that of *not asking too many questions*.

After Percival had remained a short time with Gurnemanz and outgrown his childlike simplicity, he comes to a city in which the queen Conduiramour is besieged by the army of King Clamide, whose proposals of marriage she has rejected. Percival distinguishes himself by his great bravery, especially in a single combat with Clamide, raises the siege of the city, and marries the queen, with whom he lives a short time in great happiness. Afterwards he takes leave of his beloved wife in order to see his mother, whom he supposes to be living, and also to seek new adventures. From the time of Percival's departure from his wife begins a series of hard trials for him. Lost in deep grief at the recollection of the noble

Conduiramour, he gives the reins to his horse and arrives towards evening at a lake where some men are fishing. He asks them for a night's lodging, whereupon one of them, distinguished by his rich attire and the sadness of his countenance, directs him to a castle, where, he says, he himself will be his host. Percival follows his direction and comes to a castle, when a squire, learning who has sent him hither, lets down the drawbridge. In the courtyard the grass has grown up, which proves that no festal games of chivalry have been held there for some time. Percival enters a spacious hall, which is lit by a hundred lustres, and four hundred knights are seen sitting on a hundred couches. In the lord of the castle he recognizes the richly attired stranger whom he met at the lake. Fires of aloe wood spread their aromatic odors about the hall. The lord of the castle invites Percival to take a seat by his side near the fireplace. Suddenly a squire enters, carrying a blood-dripping lance, at the sight of which all break out into loud bewailings. When the lance, after having been borne around the hall, has been removed, a door like polished steel opens and there appear in solemn procession twenty-four gorgeously attired maidens. Some of them carry burning tapers on golden lamps, others ivory trestles, others still a table plate combining the colors of a garnet and a hyacinth. At last there enters the queen, Urepanse de Joie, the purest of women, filling the hall with dazzling light and bearing the joy of Paradise, the greatest of all heavenly bliss, the Holy

Grail, which is placed on the table in front of Percival and of the host, whose sad countenance tells of great physical and moral pain. Then begins the feast for which the Holy Grail provides all manner of meat and drink. Percival, although greatly astonished at the wonderful things he sees, and at the sadness which reigns amidst all the splendor, recollects the advice of Gurnemanz not to ask too many questions, and therefore does not ask even when his host presents him with a costly sword and alludes to his bodily affliction. The feast being ended, the queen and the maidens depart, while Percival perceives through the opening door in an adjoining apartment a beautiful but very aged man, reposing on a bed. Percival is conducted to a sumptuous sleeping-room, where he passes the night tormented by dreams, which forebode his coming unhappiness. When he awakes, he looks in vain for attendants; he puts on his armor, and while the castle seems as if deserted, he finds his horse in the courtyard, where tracks show that a great number of knights have sallied forth through the castle gate. Enraged at this uncourteous behavior, he mounts his horse; but hardly has he passed the drawbridge when a squire, keeping guard at the castle gate, scolds him in harsh words for not having asked the question on which depended the recovery of the sick lord of the castle and his own happiness. Percival, confused by what he has heard, rides on and meets Sigune holding in her arms the embalmed corpse of her lover. He learns from her that he has been at the castle of the

Holy Grail; but when she hears that he has not asked for the cause of the sadness reigning in the castle, she reproaches him bitterly and tells him to leave her at once.

He rides forward and meets Jeschute in a pitiful condition, as her husband, having suspected her on account of Percival's former silly conduct, is still angry with her and disdains her. Percival and Orilus meet in hostile encounter.

Sir Percival in full array  
Rode forth with speed into the fray  
Against Orilus in the field.  
He saw upon his enemy's shield  
A dragon grim; alive it seemed.  
Another dragon fiercely gleamed  
From off his helmet's mighty crest.

They both desired to gain great praise;  
And from their battle-swords the blaze,  
And from their crests the fiery glow,  
That sprang from many a mighty blow,  
Were seen then shining far and wide.

Percival after a fierce contest vanquishes Orilus and compels him to crave mercy. It is accorded to him on the condition that he will again bestow his love on Jeschute, go as a prisoner to Arthur's court, and bear a threatening message to Sir Kai. At the same time, in a hermit's cell near by, belonging to Trèvrecent, Percival of his own free will takes an oath that Jeschute is innocent, and that his folly was the cause of her grief. Orilus and his wife are reconciled.

In the meantime Arthur and his court have set out in order to meet the valiant Red Knight, who had enjoined on all the knightly prisoners he had made to yield themselves to Kunnevare. Arthur, coming near the castle of Mont Salvage, commands his knights not to enter into any combats without his permission, as they might possibly be attacked by the chivalry of the Holy Grail, defending their territory. At the same time Percival wanders through the forest and by chance comes near Arthur's camp. During the night, while there is a heavy fall of snow, a falcon flies from Arthur's court to Percival, and remains with him until the next morning. The falcon wounds a goose, from which three drops of blood fall on the snow and recall to Percival's mind his wife, Conduiramour, her lovely countenance, and how a tear stood in each eye and one on her chin when he left her.\*

Now his fidelity appears.  
When he beholds the bloody tears  
Upon the snow that was so white,  
He thinks: "Who on these colors bright  
Has here bestowed so great a care?  
Conduiramour, to thee, the fair,  
They are alike, to thee alone.  
And God great joy to me has shown,  
Since I found here the picture thine.  
Let praise be to the Lord divine;  
And eke to all the works of his!  
Conduiramour, thine image is

\* The incident of blood-drops on the snow reminding one of a beloved being is to be found very often in the oldest Keltic and German sagas; cf. the Mabinogi of Peredur, p. 315.

Here in the snow now dyed with red  
And in the blood on snowy bed.  
Conduiramour, to them compare  
Thy forms of grace and beauty rare."

He rests absorbed in deep revery, utterly lost to the world without. Thus a squire of Kunnevare finds him, and at once reports at Arthur's camp that he has seen a knight ready for combat. Percival, whose eyes are turned away from the three drops of blood by a movement of his horse, throws off a knight who attacks him; a similar fate befalls Sir Kai, whose right arm and left leg are broken, and who is thus severely punished for his ill-treatment of Kunnevare, while Percival falls back into his unconscious condition. At last Gawain approaches unarmed, and, suspecting the magic power of the drops of blood, throws a cloth over them. Then Percival collects himself, and recognizing in Gawain his cousin, rides with him to the king's court, where he is met with the greatest honors by Arthur and Guinevere, and especially by Kunnevare, who receives him as her knight. The king and all his cavaliers request Percival to enter into the knightly fellowship of the Round Table. While a great feast is going on, there appears on a mule a woman, called Condrie la Sorcière, of horrid appearance, the terrible messenger of the Holy Grail, who thus addresses Arthur, —

"Thou son of Uther Pendragon,  
A shame it is, what thou hast done,  
For thee and many a Briton's fame.  
The best of every land could claim

To sit here in their glory's blaze,  
If poison tainted not their praise.  
Defiled is now the Table Round,  
The false one in your midst is found.  
King Arthur, once thy royal crown  
Surpassed all others in renown ;  
Now from its height thy fame will fall,  
Thy royal dignity withal.  
Thy lofty honor will decline,  
As false has proved the praise of thine.  
The glory of the Table Round,  
Its power, far and wide renowned,  
By Percival has been impaired,  
Since he its fellowship has shared."

Then Condrie turns to Percival and overwhelms him with maledictions, since at the sight of the wonders of Mont Salvage he has not asked the fatal question. Percival, deeply moved, listens to the accusation, yet without being conscious of any guilt on his part. At the same time Condrie summons the knights of the Round Table to set out to free the maidens that are imprisoned in the magic castle called Château Merveilleux. In the meantime a knight appears who accuses Gawain of the murder of his lord, and challenges him to a single combat which is to take place after forty days in the land of Ascalon. While a pagan queen from the East brings news of Feirefils, the half-brother of Percival, the latter breaks out in bitter complaints against his fate. He renounces the Round Table, of which he thinks himself unworthy, despairs of God's mercy and justice, departs to seek the Holy Grail, and vows that henceforth only a woman, his wife Conduiramour, shall be his guardian



angel in future combats. For some time during Percival's despair Gawain becomes the principal hero, and strange are the adventures related of him. Yet Percival is never entirely lost sight of, but appears in the background struggling against his destiny. Gawain is the true ideal of worldly knighthood, but he does not possess the purity of soul which is necessary to find the Holy Grail, that is, God, and therefore in spite of all his seeking he cannot find it. Percival on account of his youthful innocence found the Holy Grail without seeking it, but in his self-sufficiency threw away the possession of the greatest bliss on earth.

One of the most charming episodes is Gawain's meeting with Obilot, a maiden who still lacks five years before she will be of age, and yet begs Gawain to be her knight. After some time Gawain comes near the magnificent royal castle in the land of Ascalon, where the combat is to take place between him and the knight who accused him of the murder of his lord. On his way Gawain meets the king, who recommends him to the hospitality of his sister Antikonie. Dazzled by the lady's beauty, he proffers his love to her, when all at once an aged knight enters the room, recognizes Gawain and calls the people to arms, since Gawain, as he says, has slain his lord. Gawain and Antikonie seek refuge in a turret of the castle, where Gawain defends himself with the bolt of the door and uses a chess-board as shield, while the princess hurls the large and heavy figures of the chessmen against the besieging

host. The king arrives and at first encourages his men to the attack, but soon after a truce is established.

After long wanderings Percival meets an old knight, who with his wife and two daughters is engaged in a pilgrimage to the cell of a hermit and in spite of the deep snow walks barefooted through the forest. The old knight reproaches Percival for not observing the holy time, and advises him, as it is Good Friday, to repent of his sins. Percival in his hatred of God does not heed his words and rides away, but soon after his soul is roused to better feelings; for the first time he thinks of his Creator, and, giving the reins to his horse, he arrives at the cell of the hermit. The latter, whose name was Trèvre-cent, receives him kindly, and as Percival confesses that he has not entered a church for more than five years, he warns him to shun pride and worldly ambition and exhorts him to repentance and humility. Afterwards he relates how a dove descends from heaven every Good Friday, and places a wafer on the Holy Grail, by which the latter receives the power of giving eternal life and providing its servants with all kinds of meat and drink. As Percival announces his determination to seek the Holy Grail, the hermit tells him that it cannot be gained by force, but only in humility by those who have been called to it by heaven. Percival learns at the same time from the hermit that the Red Knight Ither, whom he had killed near Nantes, was his uncle, and also that his mother Herzeloide had died broken-hearted after he

had left her. Then the hermit informs him that Anfortas, the present king of the Holy Grail, having yielded to the allurements of forbidden love, had been severely punished for his offence. In a combat with a pagan he was wounded by a poisoned lance, and since that time had been suffering intensely and no one could cure him, while on the other hand the sight of the Holy Grail prevented him from dying. At last there appeared, the hermit continues, a prophecy written on the Holy Grail, saying that whenever a knight should come and ask for the cause of the king's sufferings without being reminded of it, the king would recover and his crown would devolve on that knight. It had indeed happened that a knight came to the castle of the Holy Grail, but he was so foolish as not to ask any questions. After some time, Percival confesses with deep regret that he was that knight. The hermit consoles him and tells him to trust in God; he also explains to him the wonders of Mont Salvage. In the course of their conversation it became evident that Trèvrecent was a brother of Anfortas, Herzeloide, and Urepanse de Joie. After some days spent in repentance and devotion, Percival takes leave of Trèvrecent, and the latter gives him absolution of his sins.

In the following parts of our poem the prominent features are the attacks of the dark powers of destruction against the worldly and spiritual chivalry. The former is represented, as has been indicated above, by the Round Table and particularly by Gawain, and the latter by the knighthood of the Holy

Grail. Just as Mephistopheles has put away the characteristics of the old Northern phantom, his horns, tail, and claws, and is dressed like "a squire of high degree, in scarlet coat with golden trimmings, a peacock's feather on his hat," so likewise his servants and instruments do not appear repulsive, but assume beauteous, enticing forms to attain their object. Thus Gawain undergoes the severest trials on account of a beautiful coquettish lady, called Orgueilleuse, whose very name denotes the pride which was the cause of Lucifer's fall. Gawain is at last triumphant, and also comes, after various adventures, into possession of the Château Merveilleux, where he frees the maidens that had been imprisoned there by the sorcerer Klinschor. Yet this is all he can do; his chivalrous virtues and his reliance on the mere forms of religion without being permeated by its spirit, do not permit him to rise to a higher level, that is, to see the Holy Grail.

The attacks against the Grail were made especially by a beautiful pagan queen, called Secundille. In the meantime Percival, continuing in his repentance, had been purified by many severe trials. With indifference he had passed by the magic castle, to the great astonishment of the knights in front of the castle who saw him ride onward. Afterwards Percival fights and conquers Gawain without intending it. His last combat is with his half-brother Feirefils, who invokes his pagan gods and fights in the service of Secundille. Percival prays to God for help, thinks of his faithful wife

Conduiramour, and after a long and fierce struggle deals at his adversary such a blow with his sword that it breaks. Feirefils disdains to avail himself of this advantage, and, the combat being thus ended, the brothers recognize each other. Percival, conscious of his own unworthiness and strong in his faith in God, rides to Mont Salvage, prostrates himself, praying, before the Holy Grail, and inquires after the cause of the suffering of the king, whereupon the latter recovers and the crown is given to Percival. At the same time his happiness is increased by the arrival of his wife, Conduiramour, with his two sons, of whom one, called Lohengrin, is destined to succeed his father in the kingdom of the Holy Grail, while the other is declared king of his worldly dominions. Henceforth the orders of the Grail demand that whenever one of its knights is sent out to become the lord of foreign lands, no questions must be asked about his descent. Lohengrin comes to Brabant in a skiff drawn by a swan, and marries the duchess of the country. In spite of his warning, his wife asks the forbidden question, whereupon he is conveyed back to the Grail by the swan. Feirefils becomes a Christian and is wedded to Urepanse de Joie, whose charms had made him forget Secundille and his pagan gods. He afterwards goes to India, where he establishes a Christian kingdom. His son is called Priest John, a name assumed also by his successors.

The fact that the kingdom of the Holy Grail could be obtained by faith alone, and not by any mere formal Christianity, as that of Gawain, shows that

✓ Wolfram conceived his work in an evangelical and reformatory spirit, and thus differed greatly from the mass of his contemporaries. On the other hand our poem is not only interesting on account of the legends it contains and the principles it sets forth, but also as giving a graphic and faithful description of the beliefs, customs, and manners of the time. "But all the outward splendor of the poem would be of little worth if it was not permeated by the great spirit of the poet, who used the old legends to present to us the spiritual development, in its phases from childlike simplicity to doubt and despair, and from these to faith and reconciliation." The idea of opposing to each other the desire of earthly enjoyment and the yearning for heavenly possessions belongs in its development chiefly to Wolfram, although its germ can be found in the French poems which are based on the same legends. In this place we may quote the statement of Professor K. Bartsch, who says: "Wolfram was the first to set forth the connection in which this question [the fatal question] and the acquisition of the Grail, depending on it, stand to the religious life of the individual. The French poets did not know what to do with them, and are entangled in contradictions with the idea of the Grail. Percival comes into the castle of the Grail, does not ask the question; and is therefore upbraided by Sigune. But with the French continuators [of Chrétien's unfinished work], Gawain also comes there, and the scene is repeated. Gawain asks the question and yet he does not obtain the kingdom; the *roi*

*pécheur* replies that he is not worthy of it, while on the other hand externally he has fulfilled all the conditions. The true reason why he is not worthy is not perceived, — because his ideal is mere worldly knighthood and its splendor.”

Bayard Taylor gives an excellent description of the mental and moral characteristics of Wolfram: “The author’s peculiar genius is manifested in every part [of the poem], and thus the work has a spiritual coherence which distinguishes it from all other epics of the age. . . . I must confess that the more I study the poem, the more I find a spiritual meaning shining through its lines. The perfect innocence and purity of Parzival as a boy are wonderfully drawn; the doubts of his age of manhood, the wasted years, the trouble and gloom which brood over him, suggest a large background of earnest thought; and although the symbolism of the Holy Grail may not be entirely clear, it means at least this much, — that peace of soul comes only through faith and obedience. Like Tennyson’s Galahad, Wolfram seems to say, in ‘Parzival,’ —

‘I muse on joy that will not cease,  
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,  
Pure lilies of eternal peace,  
Whose odors haunt my dreams.’

“To Wolfram von Eschenbach the external shows of life were but disguises through which he sought to trace the action of the moral and spiritual forces which develop the human race. His psychological instincts were too profound for a simple tale of

knightly adventure; he was not enough of a literary artist to arrange his conceptions of man's nature into a symmetrical form, and then to represent them completely through his characters; and thus we find in 'Parzival' a struggle between the two elements,—between thought and language, between idea and action. This peculiarity is at first a disturbance to the reader, but it does not prevent him from feeling the latent, underlying unity of the work." \*

In conclusion, it may be said that Wolfram's reference to the Provençal Guiot (Kiot), who is said by him to have written in Northern French, is probably a mere fiction. There was a poet named Guiot de Provins, from a little town in Brie, and it may be, as Simrock thinks, that Wolfram referred to him, in order that he might appear to have a famous Provençal poet whom he could oppose to the authority of the well-known Chrétien. Yet in spite of Wolfram's disparaging remarks in regard to Chrétien, it is a matter of fact, as W. Wackernagel † has shown, that whole passages in our epic agree almost verbally with Chrétien. There is little doubt that Wolfram followed on the whole the order of the story as found in Chrétien, from Percival's solitary education in the forest to the appearance of Feirefils. Nevertheless, apart from the passages taken almost verbally from Chrétien, Wolfram's originality in treating the subject and infusing it with new ideas and beauties is seen everywhere. The first book, in which some of the adventures of

\* Bayard Taylor, *Studies in German Literature*, pp. 92, 93.

† *Altfranzösische Lieder und Leiche*, p. 191.



Gahmuret, Percival's father, are related, contains, besides Eisenhart, several names which are German.\* They belong to the German sagas of the North Sea, and there is little doubt that even Belakane, although her name is certainly not German, may originally have belonged to the same sagas. In Gudrun we meet with several foreign names, and Belakane was probably as much a Mooress as Siegfried in Gudrun was a Moor. By the mediæval poets all pagans were commonly represented as Moors ; and in consequence of this conception, and the predilection of the age for whatever seemed fantastical, they were placed in Eastern countries. It is certain that the first book and the last two books, treating of Feirefils and Lohengrin, are not based on any French poems, but belong to Wolfram alone and entirely.

We have referred to the Mabinogion,† and in the Notes‡ will be found a brief sketch of the Mabinogi of Peredur, which, as has been said before, is often considered to be the primitive source of the Percival saga. If this were so, the Mabinogi would evidently contain a much simpler version of the story than it really presents. The spear with the streams of blood flowing from it, and the salver, in which was a man's head surrounded by a profusion of blood,§ indicate the impress which the Mabinogi received from the legend of the Holy Grail, while the latter must primitively have been unconnected

\* They have not been given in the brief outline on the preceding pages, as they are of no great importance in the story of the poem.

† p. 226.

‡ Note 9, p. 310.

§ p. 313.

with, and foreign to the earliest account of the Percival story. On the other hand, although the Mabinogi is not the primitive source of the Percival saga, it presents some features which show the legend of the Grail in an earlier stage of development than it appears in Wolfram's epic. The word "Grail" denoted, as has been stated above,\* a cup or dish, and the salver with the bloody head, in the Mabinogi, points clearly to John the Baptist. Again the Knights Templars, after whose organization that of the chivalry of the Grail was conceived, were accused of worshipping certain idols, and particularly a head, which they invoked in the expectation of obtaining from it riches and the fruits of the earth in abundance. It was also asserted that the novices of the order had to prostrate themselves before the head, as Percival does before the Grail. The Genoese obtained possession of a precious cup which was supposed to be the Holy Grail, when Cæsarea in 1101 was taken by the Crusaders. They dedicated the cup to the Chapel of John the Baptist. In the French prose romance of the Grail, Arthur celebrates the great festival, during which Condrie appears, not on Pentecost, as the court expected, but on St. John's day. In the version of Menessier, a continuator of Chrétien, Percival, after being crowned king of the Grail, takes a vow on St. John's day, and lives for five years on nothing but the food supplied by the Grail. Although in the Mabinogi the name of John the Baptist is not mentioned, yet it is still the head that seems to be of

\* p. 227.

prime importance, and not the salver or dish, as in the later legends of the Grail. Some of the transformations of the story, as they appear after Wolfram's time, have been indicated above; and we may here add that the spear of the pagan, by which Anfortas was wounded, became afterwards the lance with which Longinus pierced the side of Jesus, while the sword that the king gives to Percival in the castle of the Grail was supposed in later times to have formerly belonged to Judas Maccabeus.\*

That the Mabinogi is not the earliest account of the Percival story, is also seen from the fact that the dwarf and dwarfess salute Peredur as the glory of knight-hood.† Yet in the primitive version the laughing at the simple-mindedness of Percival must have been the main feature, as is evident from the ancient popular tales of that kind. In these stories generally a princess of great beauty appears so sad that she will neither laugh nor speak, whereupon the king, her father, promises her hand and a part of the kingdom to whosoever can make her laugh. The wisest men of the realm endeavor in vain to drive away the gloom of the princess; but the princess laughs only when the dolt enters in his ridiculous costume, and he obtains by his simplicity the hand of the maiden and a portion of the realm. If the legend of the Grail had been fully and openly introduced into the Mabinogi, it would at once have been evident that the Welsh tale was derived, or at least partly borrowed, from a foreign source. Imaginary

\* Note 10, p. 322.

† p. 311.

creations of native origin and growth, as the sorceresses of Gloucester, were connected with the Mabinogi, and an altogether strange and absurd version of the blood-dripping lance, the lame king, and the omission of the fatal question was brought about in the place of the real legend of the Grail. As Simrock says, "if the sorceresses of Gloucester had actually killed the cousin of Peredur, whose head lay on the bloody salver, and had wounded his uncle, the lame king, and if Peredur had been appointed to revenge all these things, then there existed no reason why at the very first meeting, even without his asking, he should not have been informed of the connection and been urged to vengeance, since this takes place at the last meeting and without his asking the question. And how shall the revenge for these things enable the lame king to regain his health?" It is probable that the Mabinogi of Peredur was composed during the middle of the twelfth century, and that its author drew a part of its contents from a work of one of the predecessors of Chrétien. It was no uncommon thing that Welsh stories were carried into other parts of Europe, were there enlarged and changed, and afterwards brought back in the new form to Wales.

It is to be regretted that so little is known of the life of Wolfram von Eschenbach. He was born in the second half of the twelfth century, of a family that belonged to the lower nobility and took its name from the town of Eschenbach, near Ansbach in Northern Bavaria. Being poor and obliged to live

upon his poetic talent, he spent a great portion of his life in wandering about as a minstrel. The year 1204 he passed at the court of Count Hermann of Thuringia, at the Wartburg near Eisenach, a castle famous in later times by Luther's sojourn, and not far from Weimar, the German Athens of the eighteenth century.

Besides "Parzival," his greatest work, which was probably composed between 1200 and 1215, Wolfram is the author of a few lyric poems; of "Titirel," a fragment, containing the love story of Sigune\* and Schionatulander; and of "Willehalm," also a fragment, celebrating the deeds of William of Orange, a contemporary of Karl the Great. The fame of Wolfram spread far and wide in Germany during his life, and even long afterwards his memory was held in great honor. In the "Wartburgkrieg" (the Contest at the Wartburg) he has become a legendary personage. A striking contrast to the praise bestowed on Wolfram by his contemporaries and succeeding generations is found in the well-known judgment of Gottfried von Strassburg, the famous author of "Tristan and Isold," who, without naming Wolfram, calls him an inventor of strange, wild stories, and upbraids him for the obscurity and sombre earnestness with which his ideas are expressed. Thus, although both Wolfram and Gottfried took their themes from French versions of old Keltic traditions, they showed a very great diversity in the treatment of their material, in language as well as in ideas. Wolf-

\* The lady mentioned in "Parzival," p. 236.

ram seemed to be a censor of his age, and to devote all the power of his mind to the upholding of the highest moral ideas, while Gottfried was a man of the world, and was fond of swimming with the current of worldly pleasures and delights.

Wolfram was educated, like most noblemen of his time, merely in what pertained to knightly warfare. Although he had acquired much practical knowledge in his adventuresome life, and was well acquainted with the astronomy, natural history, and theology of his age, yet he himself admits that he could neither read nor write his native tongue, and understood French only when it was spoken. Therefore it is so much the more astonishing that he should compose a poem like "Parzival," so admirable in regard to its technical forms and to the ideas by which he has shown his originality and his poetic genius.

## CHAPTER IX.

### I. TRISTAN AND ISOLD.— II. IWEIN.

I. THE story of Tristan is of Keltic origin, and in later times entered into the saga of Arthur and the legends of the Grail, with which primitively it had no connection. It is probable that a myth lies at the foundation of the traditions referring to Tristan, since even in a comparatively late production, as in our epic, there appear some features reminding us of a mythical origin, as the fight with the dragon, the love-draught, and Isold's magic art of healing. Although some laudable efforts have been made to trace out and explain the myth of Tristan, little more than hypotheses presenting some probable views has as yet been gained. The story of Tristan was known in England at an early epoch, and thence was brought to France. The famous Chrétien de Troyes composed a poem on Tristan, but his work is lost. The French epics and traditions became known in Germany, where, about the year 1210, Gottfried von Strassburg wrote the great production which will be considered on the following pages.

Gottfried's poem is divided into thirty sections ; ✓

✓ the first of which forms an introduction, where, among other matters, he shows from what source he derived the material for his subject, and what was the principal idea that guided him in the composition of his work.

Love, honor, faith, and constant mood,  
Besides full many another good,  
Are never cherished anywhere  
So fondly and so well as there  
Where joy that springs from love doth reign,  
And love pours out and feels her pain.

Why should a noble mind not bear  
*One* ill for thousand pleasures fair,  
For many joys some cause to moan?  
Who ne'er of grief in love has known,  
From love no joy has he gained ever.  
For joy and grief withal can never  
In heartfelt love be disunited.  
One must, with each of them delighted,  
Both fame and honor gain and cherish,  
Or be without them doomed to perish.

Thereupon the poet remarks that his tale is destined to afford pleasure and comfort to those who have met with sorrow in love, and that such will delight in his poem. The story of Tristan and Isold, and of their dismal fate, will ever live in the memory of noble souls.

Rivalin, a powerful vassal of Duke Morgan of Brittany, took up arms against his liege lord. After the war had continued for some time, peace was concluded for one year. Rivalin intrusted his country to the care of the brave knight Rual li foitenant, and went to the court of Mark, the renowned king of



Cornwall and England, where he was received with great honors. At a tournament held during the lovely month of May, he distinguished himself signally above all the other champions, and gained the favor of the ladies. After the tournament was ended, he saluted the beautiful sister of the king, called Blanchefleur, and soon a deep and sincere affection, whose gradual growth is vividly and feelingly described by our poet, united the hearts of Rivalin and Blanchefleur.

Afterward a hostile army entered the country of King Mark, and threatened to devastate the whole kingdom. Rivalin, who set out with the host of King Mark to defend the country, was very dangerously wounded in the ensuing battle. Blanchefleur, on hearing the news of her friend's misfortune, was overwhelmed with grief, and at once departed in disguise to the camp to seek Rivalin. The latter recovered, and both lived for some time in love and happiness together. Soon after, as tidings were brought that Duke Morgan threatened a new war, Rivalin returned to his country and took Blanchefleur with him. On the advice of the faithful marshal Rual they were married, and Rivalin left his wife to the care of approved friends before he went to the war, in which he was slain. Blanchefleur was inconsolable at the loss of her husband, and soon after bore a son whose birth was her death.

Rual and his wife pretended that the child was theirs in order to protect him from Duke Morgan's intrigues.

He was christened "Tristan" from the French *triste*,—a suggestive name, denoting not only the sadness of his parents' death, but his own dismal fate thereafter. Tristan was brought up, through the care of his foster-father, in all the arts and acquirements of chivalry, and came, after many and various adventures, to the court of King Mark, where afterwards on the arrival of Rual he learned the name and destiny of his parents. When he had been dubbed knight by the king, his uncle, he went to his own country, of which he took possession, and then slew the Duke Morgan in revenge for his father's death. Having returned to Cornwall, he heard that the powerful Duke Morold, in the name of his brother-in-law, King Gormun of Ireland, exacted the tribute for Cornwall and England, as these countries had been subject to him during the early youth of King Mark. Tristan charged the knights of the latter with cowardice if they should submit to the conditions of Morold, who demanded thirty noble youths from each land; but as they showed no courage, he challenged Morold to combat.

The battle was to take place on the morrow in the sea off the coast of Cornwall. Morold's boat was to be the first to land. Morold's boat was the first to land. Tristan let his boat be the first to land. Morold asked him for the cause of this. Tristan replied—

"One boat is here; two men are we.  
No doubt, I ween, can ever be,  
If we shall not together die,  
That one of us, be't you or I,

Must meet his death and overthrow.  
For him who triumphs o'er his foe  
The boat suffices that erewhile  
Has borne thee hither to this isle."

Morold attempted to avoid the combat on condition that the tribute should be paid. He said to Tristan:

"Methinks for thee 't were fortunate,  
Forsooth, I grieve much at thy fate,  
That I shall slay thee in this fight;  
I never have beheld a knight  
With whom I have been pleased so well."

To him Tristan commenced to tell:  
"No tribute shall henceforth be paid,  
Or else no peace can now be made."

The combat began, and great was the bravery displayed by the two champions.

Sir Morold rode upon his steed,  
And flew against Tristan with speed  
Still greater than is falcons' flight;  
But warlike too was Tristan's might.

After some time Tristan was wounded by his adversary's poisoned sword, and Morold told him that no one on earth could cure his wound save his sister Isold, Queen of Ireland. Morold proposed peace and friendship with Tristan if the tribute should be given, but Tristan refused to agree to his demands, and said that on account of a single wound the combat was not decided. The fight was renewed, and after a fierce struggle Morold was slain by Tristan's sword, a small piece of which remained in Morold's head.

Tristan sailed back in Morold's boat to his uncle's friends, among whom he was joyfully received, while the people of Morold returned with the corpse of their leader to King Gurmun. There Morold's sister Isold and her daughter, also named Isold, were overwhelmed with grief; at the king's command every one who came from Cornwall to Ireland was doomed to forfeit his life. The piece from the sword found in Morold's head was carefully preserved.

As Tristan's wound could not be healed by any physician, the hero decided to go in disguise to Ireland to see the queen Isold. With King Mark's consent the report was spread that Tristan would depart to Salerno in order to get cured, but he had sailed to Ireland, where he arrived after some time. By various stratagems, and especially by his great skill in playing the harp, he succeeded in coming into the presence of the queen. Every one pitied the sick harper, and the queen, delighted with his playing, offered to cure him. He called himself Tantris, and, to recompense the queen, he instructed her daughter, young Isold, in the languages and in playing the harp. His wound was healed after twenty days; yet the queen would not let him depart until he pretended that he was married, and that his wife might believe him dead if he did not return soon.

Tristan, having returned to the court of his uncle, greatly praised the beauty of young Isold. As he had succeeded in a most dangerous enterprise, many courtiers and powerful vassals of the land were filled with envy of the noble hero, and sought his destruction.

They requested King Mark to marry, so that he might have an heir to his throne. When the king refused to comply with their demands, and told them that Tristan should be his heir, their jealousy and hatred became so great that Tristan feared for his life and was determined to leave the court. At an assembly of the nobles it was decided that the king should marry the beautiful Isold, and that Tristan should sail to Ireland, as the messenger of the king, to woo the princess for his lord. The king, through sincere friendship for his nephew and fearing the hate of Gurmun, reluctantly agreed to this proposal, and Tristan departed, taking with him, much against their will, twenty of the vassals who were his enemies.

Tristan succeeded in landing safely on the coast of Ireland near the royal residence. At that time the people of the land were greatly harassed by the devastations of a huge dragon, and the king had ✓ promised the hand of his daughter to the knight who would slay the monster. Many nobles, from love of fair Isold, had ventured to meet the dragon, but were killed by it. Thus the whole country was aroused, and Tristan, who knew about the strange adventure and the king's promise, was encouraged in his plans. On the day following his arrival, he went in quest of the dragon, and when he came near its den, he saw four knights fleeing from it in haste and terror. One of them was the seneschal of the queen, a coward, who was deeply in love with young Isold. Tristan, after a dangerous and bloody combat, slew

the dragon, cut out its tongue, and placed it near his heart. Wearied by the long contest and the glowing heat that came from the dragon's jaws, he sought a resting-place near a cool spring, but, stupefied by the vapor arising from the monster's tongue, fell down unconscious.

At the same time the seneschal had heard the roaring of the dragon, and, supposing the latter to be dead, he went back. Although filled with great fear at the sight of the dead body, he at last mustered courage enough to thrust his spear into its jaws. Then he rode to the royal palace, announced himself as the slayer of the dragon, and reminded the king of his promise. Isold hated the seneschal; but, to her comfort, her mother prophesied that another had accomplished the deed. Afterward the ladies rode to the former hiding-place of the dragon, and soon found the knight. The monster's tongue was taken away from him, whereupon he revived, and young Isold became aware that it was the same personage as the harper Tantris. He was kindly cared for by the ladies, and declared himself ready to fight with the seneschal. Young Isold was charmed with the noble appearance of the knight, and wondered why such a man should not be the ruler of a mighty realm. After his weapons had been cleaned and polished, the princess secretly went to the place where they were displayed, and happened to draw his sword. She gazed on it for a long time, and saw that a small piece of it was gone. In amazement and with feelings of dire foreboding she sought the splinter that was found in

Morold's head, and discovered that it fitted exactly into the knight's sword.

Then all at once her heart grew cold  
In thinking of that deed of old.  
Her color changed through grief and ire  
From deadly pale to glowing fire.  
With sorrow she exclaimed : " Alas !  
Oh, woe ! What has now come to pass ?  
Who carried here this weapon dread,  
By which mine uncle was struck dead ?  
And he who slew him, Tristan hight.  
Who gave it to this minstrel-knight ? "

After some pondering on the matter she perceived that the names of Tristan and Tantris, by changing the order of the syllables, were the same. Teeming with desires of revenge, she rushed on Tristan, with intent to kill him. Her mother intervened, and Tristan told them that if they should give up their hatred, he would announce to them some tidings of great import. At the advice of Brangäne, ~~a court~~ lady in the confidence of the queen, a reconciliation was brought about, and Tristan communicated King Mark's proposal to wed fair Isold to King Gurmun, who agreed to it. The seneschal continued for a time in his pretence of having slain the dragon, but he was put to shame and confusion before the whole court when Tristan showed the tongue of the monster. Tristan offered to enter the lists against the seneschal, but the latter withdrew in a cowardly fashion and thus became the sport of the courtiers.

While the necessary arrangements were made for

the voyage to King Mark's country, the queen prepared a love-draught and intrusted the glass in which it was contained to Brangäne, who was to accompany young Isold to her new home. By the order of the queen the draught was to be given to Mark and Isold. The latter was deeply saddened when she came to bid farewell to her parents and friends. On the voyage Tristan sought to console her, but she rebuked him as the cause of her sorrows and particularly as the slayer of Morold. As Isold and her ladies, not accustomed to long voyages, were soon fatigued, Tristan commanded the crew to sail towards the land and cast anchor near the coast. While some of the men went on shore, Tristan approached Isold and entered into conversation with her. He called for wine, and a maiden, attending on the princess, brought him a glass, thinking that it contained the desired potion.

Although like wine it might appear,  
It was unceasing sorrow drear,  
Of heartfelt pain the endless growth,  
Which at the end brought death to both.  
Of this the maid knew naught whate'er  
She rose and speedily went there  
Where in a glass the fatal draught  
Was kept concealed, not to be quaffed.  
To Tristan first she passed the same;  
He gave it to the royal dame.  
Thereof she drank reluctantly,  
Gave it to him, and then drank he;  
That wine it was, they both believed.  
Then came Brangänè, who perceived  
And recognized at once the glass;



She well saw what had come to pass.  
Thereon she felt such dire dismay  
That all her strength was giving way,  
And she appeared as are the dead ;  
Her heart was filled with mortal dread.  
She seized the baleful glass she knew,  
And bore it hence away, and threw  
It in the wildly raging sea.  
" Oh, woe ! " she spoke, " Oh, woe is me,  
That in this world I e'er was born,  
I, wretched one ! Now I am shorn  
Of troth and honor which were mine.  
Have pity on me, Lord divine ;  
Oh that I came unto this shore  
And death took me not hence before,  
That with Isold my lot was e'er  
This fatal enterprise to share !  
Oh, woe, Isold ! Woe, Tristan, too !  
The draught is death to both of you."

A sudden and glowing love took possession of Tristan and Isold. In the beginning, while they thought of the honor due to King Mark, they endeavored to struggle against the all-absorbing passion, but soon they declared their sentiments to each other. Brangäne became aware of their intimacy, and when she questioned them, Tristan confessed that he and Isold were united by an intense and mutual love. Afterwards Brangäne told them of the love-draught, and that it would be their death. Tristan replied, —

" If Dame Isold, the fair,  
Should be my death fore'er,  
Then I would fain be sighing  
For an eternal dying."

All were rejoiced when after some time they came near the coast of Cornwall; but Tristan and Isold, who had begun to live as husband and wife, were filled with sorrow and anxiety. Isold was received with great honors in the land of King Mark, and the wedding feast was celebrated with much splendor. The fame of the young queen's marvellous beauty was spread far and wide. Brangäne knew well that, by her inattention to the trust which Isold's mother had bestowed on her, she had caused the guilt of Tristan and Isold, and thus she favored the secret interviews and intimacies between the lovers. She aided them to deceive the king, even by sacrificing her own personal honor. As the betrayal of the king by his wife and nephew was unknown to all, Isold was held in great honor by the court and the people, and Tristan was renowned for his valor throughout the kingdom.

For some time the affection that seemed to exist between Tristan and Isold was explained at court on the ground that they were near relatives, and nothing was suspected. However the seneschal Marjodo, Tristan's roommate, discovered one night that Tristan had left the room. He arose and, following Tristan's footsteps, came to the apartment of the queen, where he beheld the two lovers. Marjodo, who loved the queen, was filled with envy of Tristan, and told the king that there was a rumor at court in regard to his wife and his nephew; yet he did not say that he had convinced himself of their infidelity. Henceforth there began a series of plots and counterplots on the part of the king on one side and of Tristan and

Isold on the other. The king's suspicion was often aroused, and he would become nearly certain of their guilt, while again at other times, by Isold's cunning, which was aided by Brangäne's crafty counsels, he could not help believing in his wife's innocence. In this manner it went on for a long period, the king being tossed about between doubts and suspicions. Marjodo and the dwarf Melot were the spies that closely watched the doings of the lovers, and reported them to the king.

Among the many incidents occurring during that time the following may be mentioned. At the advice of an old and revered bishop, the king demanded that Isold should appear before the council of the nobles of the land, and there he required that, to prove her innocence, she should undergo the ordeal by fire. The queen assented, and the time for the ordeal to take place was appointed six weeks thence. In the meanwhile Isold was filled with gloomy apprehensions, and wrote to Tristan to appear by all means on the day of the trial. Tristan obeyed her and came in the garb of a pilgrim, and with his face disguised so that no one except Isold could recognize him. When she beheld him, she begged that the pilgrim might be permitted to carry her from the bridge through the water to the shore. In her feigned humility she pretended that she would not be borne by any knight. Her demand was granted, and on the way the queen whispered to Tristan that when near the land, he should fall as if by chance. He did so, and in such a manner that he fell down

by the side of Isold. The attendants of the queen hastened to punish the pilgrim for his awkwardness, but Isold told them to abstain from their intentions, as the pilgrim was weak and sick and had fallen against his will. After the royal party had arrived at the place where the ordeal was to be held, the queen, in presence of the king, the nobles, and prelates of the realm, took the oath that no man had ever lain by her side save the king and that poor pilgrim. The king was satisfied with this declaration, and Isold took the glowing iron into her hand. She was not burned by it, and the king's suspicions vanished.

Nevertheless the king soon became aware that his wife loved his nephew, and he banished both of them from the court. They went into the wilderness, and there in a grotto, which had been built by the giants of old, and was beautifully ornamented, they passed many days together in great happiness. Their abode was surrounded by trees, and a cool well was near by, while they were delighted by the song of the birds in the wood. At one time the king, having gone to hunt in the forest, happened to come to the grotto, where he beheld Tristan and Isold sleeping, yet he saw a drawn sword placed between them. Doubts arose again in the mind of the king, while at the same time his heart was filled anew with love of Isold. At the advice of his counsellors the king sent a messenger to Tristan and Isold, and bade them return to the court.

Yet only a short time elapsed before the king was finally and fully convinced that they were betraying

him. The two lovers, teeming with sadness, took leave of each other, and Isold gave Tristan a ring to remind him of his fidelity to her. After many adventures in foreign lands, Tristan, to forget his pain in being separated from Isold, took part in a war which his friend Kaedin waged against his enemies. Kaedin and Tristan defeated their foes, and Tristan on account of his matchless bravery was held in great esteem by all, and especially at the court of his friend. Kaedin had a beautiful sister, called Isold with the White Hands, and her name constantly reminded Tristan of his love, the blond Isold, the wife of his uncle. Isold with the White Hands and Tristan soon loved each other, yet Tristan in lonely hours accused himself of his infidelity towards the blond Isold. However, he did not shun the presence of Kaedin's sister, although his heart was torn by the struggle between his former love and the new affection. He tried to persuade himself that the blond Isold did not love him any more, while he for her sake avoided the society of other ladies, and was deprived of all joys and pleasures.

Here Gottfried's poem breaks off. Ulrich von Tûrheim and Heinrich von Freiberg wrote continuations of Gottfried's work. The poem of Ulrich was composed about the year 1240, and has little merit. Heinrich's production, written about the year 1300, although on the whole inferior to the model, is a fine poem, and in many parts a wonderful imitation of the master's genius. Gottfried's Tristan has been

translated and continued by Karl Simrock and Hermann Kurz. Although there is a great diversity in the treatment of many details, both among the old and modern continuators, they all agree as to the general features of the end of the story. Tristan, dangerously wounded, sent for his blond Isold, who alone could cure his wound. The understanding was that if his beloved Isold would come, a white sail or flag should be hoisted on the vessel that bore her, but if the ship should return without her, a black sail. Blond Isold hastened to come to the succor of her friend, and a white sail appeared on the waves; but when Tristan asked Isold with the White Hands, who in the eyes of the world seemed to be his wife, what she perceived on the sea, filled with jealousy, she answered, "Black is the sail." Tristan at once died broken-hearted, and blond Isold, who arrived soon after, fell dead to the ground by the side of Tristan's corpse. When King Mark came to the place and was apprised of the fatal potion that irresistibly had united the hearts of the two lovers, he pitied their fate, and exclaimed that if he had known this, he would fain have rendered them happy. A grape-vine was planted on Isold's grave and a rose-bush on that of Tristan. The vine and the rose-bush grew together and lovingly intertwined.\*

Among all nations, and wellnigh at all times, we meet with stories similar to that of Tristan and Isold. It will suffice here to refer to the tales of Romeo and Juliet, Pyramus and Thisbe, and Hero and Leander. Pyramus stabs himself on account of the sup-

\* See Note 11, p. 323.

posed death of Thisbe; and Romeo, thinking Juliet to be dead, drinks the poison. By a somewhat similar error Tristan dies, and his death causes the death of Isold. At first sight it seems hardly fair to compare Shakespeare's Juliet with Isold, the wife of King Mark. Yet if we disregard for a moment the striking and incompatible differences between the two heroines, there is one characteristic common to both of them: they are not merely loving women, capable of any sacrifice for the object of their affection; but Juliet as well as Isold is love itself; both have no existence out of their passion, and love is the only sphere in which they move. The guilt of Tristan and Isold is extenuated by the magic potion which destroyed their free will and made them blind tools of fate. In this connection we may quote Bayard Taylor's remarks referring to Tennyson's treatment of the subject. The famous translator of Goethe's "Faust" says: \* "If you are familiar with Tennyson's poem of 'The Last Tournament' in his 'Idylls of the King,' I beg you to notice the violence he has done to the original legend. He quite omits the episode of the magic love-potion, and presents Tristan and Iseult to us as a pair of common sinners. It is this very magic spell — the equivalent of the Fate of the Greek tragedies — which moves our deepest sympathies, and ennobles the two characters. Tristan cannot escape his devotion, in the legend; he is made faithful by a fatal spell; but Tennyson makes him sing, —

\* Studies in German Literature, p. 86.

‘Free love, free field; we love but while we may!’”

It is to be hoped that Simrock is right when he says that a certain scene in Gottfried's poem is probably an interpolation. If so, then Gottfried deserves also, from a moral point of view, the approbation of his modern admirers in a higher degree than could otherwise be bestowed on him. As then there is no evidence of any real marriage between Mark and Isold, the relation between the two lovers appears somewhat less offensive, while it must also be said that Tristan and Isold with the White Hands are only apparently married. It is likewise to be hoped that Gottfried, if he had finished his work, might have concluded in such a manner as to show that mere worldly love was contrary to the spirit of Christianity and to the highest ideal of chivalry, yet there are but few indications in the poem that such was the intention of its author. But Gottfried did not invent the story of Tristan and Isold; on the contrary, it was well known in his time, and in a merely poetic sense formed one of the most beautiful legends of Mediæval Europe. He permeated the material which his predecessors had left him with a new life and spirit. He is undoubtedly a master of the language, and his versification and style are models of genuine artistic skill. In this place we may again quote Bayard Taylor,\* who, although he does not express any original idea, yet refers to Gottfried's poetic gifts and to the difference between Wolfram and Gottfried in very appropriate and well-chosen words: “Gottfried von



Strassburg certainly possesses in a very high degree the talent of poetic narrative. We may tire of his interminable details when reading several books of 'Tristan' connectedly; but we may open the work anywhere, and we strike at once upon life, movement, and brightness. The uniformity of the short iambic measure, which allows little variety of cadence, is not favorable to a long epic poem; but the authors of that age seem to have known only this measure and a rather rough alexandrine. The iambic pentameter appears in their lyrics, and moves with both sweetness and dignity; yet it never occurred to them to use it in narrative poetry. . . . Wolfram's adherents would be among the thinkers, who were then rapidly increasing in number; Gottfried's, among the men of refinement and education. The latter may be called the literary ancestor of Wieland, but Wolfram's lineal descendant, with a long line of generations between, was Goethe." Gottfried's influence on the succeeding generations of poets and poetic narrators was very great, and extended to the middle of the fourteenth century. It has been truly said of him that he founded a school, and that his admirers were also his imitators. Among them we may mention Konrad von Würzburg, who was a man of great learning and a poet of no mean talent, but whose productions cannot be ranked among the great epics of Mediaeval Germany. Konrad, who died in 1287, composed an heroic poem, entitled "Der trojanische Krieg" (The War of Troy), of about 60,000 lines. The work was not finished by him, but by an

unknown author. It begins by relating the events before the birth of Paris, and in the combats appear Russians, Danes, Hungarians, and Germans, — the latter the bravest of all, — to aid the cause of the Greeks, while the Pagans and Mohammedans fight for Troy.

Before Gottfried's time the subject of his epic had been treated by a German poet, Eilhart von Oberge, a Saxon knight and a vassal of the great Henry the Lion, the contemporary and liegeman of Frederick Barbarossa. Eilhart's poem, called "Tristan," was composed about the year 1170; its language is not the Low German, as has been stated by some writers, but the so-called Middle German, that is, the High German idiom spoken in Central Germany. It is probable that Eilhart's epic is based on a French work, since it agrees upon the whole with the tradition that is represented in the French poem of Berox. According to Jacob Grimm,\* the legend as it appears in Eilhart's production seems to be nearer its ancient formation than it is in Gottfried's poem.

It is not certain what was the direct source from which Gottfried derived the material for his epic. The work of Thomas von Britannie, which he mentions as his authority, has not been found, while the English poem "Sir Tristrem," in which reference is made to Thomas of Erceldonne, for many reasons cannot be the source of Gottfried's production. On the other hand, as Chrétien's epic of Tristan has been lost, and as Gottfried expressly names Thomas von Britannie as his source, there are only two

\* Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen, 1835, p. 662.

French poems that can be considered here. Both exist only in fragments. One of them, that of Berox, has just been mentioned in its relation to Eilhart; the other \* refers to a Thomas, but it can be compared with Gottfried's epic only to a very limited extent, as it begins about where Gottfried's work breaks off. Yet the able French scholar, A. Bossert, compared the fragments of Thomas with the end of Gottfried's *Tristan*, and discovered that a small portion of the text was indeed nearly alike in both of them.† At the same time it must be said that the fragment of the French Thomas agrees upon the whole with the last part of the English poem "*Sir Tristrem*." Although no conclusive evidence as to Gottfried's source can be established from an examination of the above-named works, yet at all events it is certain that Gottfried's *Tristan* is not the production of a translator, but the masterpiece of a real poet.

Unfortunately but little is known of Gottfried's life; there is, however, hardly any doubt that he was born in the city after which he is named. He was a contemporary of Wolfram von Eschenbach and Hartmann von Aue, and perhaps a personal friend of the latter. Gottfried was also the author of a few lyric

\* Cf. *Tristan*. Recueil de ce qui reste de poèmes relatifs à ses aventures, composés en français, en anglo-normand et en grec dans les XII. et XIII. siècles, publié par Francisque Michel. Londres, I., II., 1835; III., 1839.

† *Tristan et Iseult*, poème de Gotfrit de Strasbourg comparé à d'autres poèmes sur le même sujet. Thèse présentée à la faculté des lettres de Paris par A. Bossert. Paris, Franck, 1865.

poems ; it seems, according to the testimony of Ulrich von Tûrheim and Heinrich von Freiberg,\* that death alone prevented the great master from finishing his work. He died in the prime of manhood, not long after the year 1210. Although not of noble birth, he was well acquainted with the life of the aristocracy of his time, and filled with a noble enthusiasm for chivalric and courtly customs and manners. His *Tristan* was read particularly by the higher classes of Mediæval German society, and many are the manuscripts of the work that have been preserved, among which are six complete ones written on parchment. Besides the modern German translations and continuations by K. Simrock and H. Kurz which have been mentioned,† we must refer here to the grand epic reproduction of the legend by K. L. Immermann (who died at Düsseldorf in 1840) and to Matthew Arnold's famous poem "*Tristram and Iseult*." It is hardly necessary to say that the subject has also been immortalized by the genius of Richard Wagner.

✓ II. Hartmann von Aue composed four epics, two of which, "*Erek*" and "*Iwein*," belong to the sagacycle of King Arthur and the Round Table. The story of *Erek*, which Hartmann took from Chrétien de Troyes, is nearly the same as in Tennyson's "*Enid*" in the "*Idylls of the King*;" but in the latter the name of *Enid*'s husband is *Geraint*, and not *Erek*.‡ From a comparison of Hartmann's "*Erek*" with his

\* p. 273.

† p. 274.

‡ Cf. also the *Mabinogi* of *Geraint*, the son of *Erbin*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest.

other works, and especially with his "Iwein," it is evident that he wrote the first-named epic while he was very young. The poem is certainly not devoid of some beautiful passages, yet a great part of it is tiresome reading on account of the lengthy and diffuse narration of unimportant matters; for instance, about five hundred lines are devoted to the description of a horse. Moreover, the language is not so perfect and the verse is not so carefully constructed as in some of his later works.

If any one of Hartmann's productions can be ranked among the great epics of Mediæval Germany, it must be "Iwein," or "Der Ritter mit dem Löwen." The subject is taken from the "Chevalier au Lion" of Chrétien de Troyes,\* and the contents of Hartmann's poem are briefly as follows. King Arthur celebrated a great festival at Pentecost, and many knights and noble ladies were assembled at his court. In the evening a knight, a relative of Iwein, related that about ten years before he traversed a vast forest and afterwards came to a glade. There he saw many wild animals, and among them stood a man of huge stature and of terrible aspect whom the animals obeyed. When the knight said that he had departed in quest of adventures, the man told him to go to a fountain which was a few miles distant. By the side of the fountain there was a marble slab, over which a golden

\* Cf. also the Mabinogi of the Lady of the Fountain, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest. There is no need to give here an outline of this Mabinogi, since the subject is not of sufficient importance to call for a comparison between the Welsh story and the German poem.

bowl was suspended. There he was to pour some water from the bowl on the slab. The knight at once set out, and after traversing a beautiful country, reached the fountain. He cast a bowlful of water on the marble slab, whereupon a fearful thunder was heard, a heavy shower came, and huge hailstones fell. The song of the birds ceased, and the woods were destroyed by the storm. Immediately afterwards the lord of the country appeared and furiously challenged the knight to a combat. The latter had hardly time to prepare himself for defence, and was quickly vanquished by his adversary, who despoiled him of his horse. He was then obliged to return on foot, and felt sorely grieved and ashamed at the issue of his adventure.

One of the cavaliers who had listened to the knight's story was Iwein, who determined to seek the magic fountain and avenge the discomfiture of his friend. But as Arthur solemnly declared that within a fortnight he would set out with all his followers to encounter the lord of the fountain, Iwein at once departed secretly, because he was resolved to carry off the palm of victory alone. He came to the fountain, and everything happened as the knight had related. However, in the combat Iwein inflicted a fatal wound on King Askalon, the lord of the country, and pursued him to the drawbridge of the royal castle. Askalon, although deadly wounded, succeeded in entering his castle; but the portcullis, when it fell, struck Iwein's horse behind the saddle and cut it in two. Iwein barely escaped with his life, and

found himself imprisoned between the portcullis and the inner gate that had been closed. In this distress there came to him from a hidden door a lady, called Lunete, who was one of the maidens of the queen. She gave him a magic ring, by which he could render himself invisible and thus escape the revenge of the people of the castle. While the king was being buried Iwein perceived the queen Laudine, his widow, and, struck by her marvellous beauty, was filled with sudden and glowing love of her. By Lunete's cunning advice the queen was convinced that she must have a husband who would be able to defend the magic fountain against King Arthur. At first Laudine would not listen to Lunete's insinuations, but soon she ordered Iwein to be sent for at once. Lunete had told the queen that the knight who conquered her husband must be braver than the latter, and therefore worthier of her love. Laudine, perceiving Iwein, returned his affection, and became his wife. In this connection the poet takes the opportunity to defend the inconstancy of women in a humorous manner. He pretends that the cause of their fickleness is nothing but their innate kindness.

Soon after Iwein's marriage King Arthur arrived at the fountain. Iwein, being now the lord of the country, at once rode forth to the combat and overcame the boastful Sir Kai. Then he went to the king, and great was the joy of Arthur and his court when they saw that it was Iwein who had become the ruler of the land. Arthur and his knights were hospitably entertained by Iwein during seven days,

and Laudine was greatly pleased with the prowess of her husband. Gawain advised Iwein not to be like Erek, and through love of his wife forget the duties and honors of chivalry. Thereupon Iwein took leave of Laudine, but promised to return to her within a year.

Yet the time passed quickly at Arthur's court, whither Iwein had gone, and a year elapsed before he was aware of it. Then Lunete appeared with a message from the queen Laudine, who accused him of faithlessness, and told him that she loved him no more. At these tidings Iwein was filled with sadness and left the court. Like an insane man, he wandered about in the woods. His appearance became so changed that he could hardly be recognized. After some time he was found in this pitiful condition by a lady and her maids; they took care of him, and by means of a precious ointment his health was restored. He showed his gratitude by victoriously defending the land of the lady against her enemies. Afterwards he left the country, and on his wanderings met a lion who was fighting with a dragon. He aided the former and slew the latter. The lion became henceforth faithfully attached to him, and was his inseparable companion.

At last by chance Iwein arrived in Laudine's realm. There he found Lunete, who on account of false accusations had been imprisoned by order of the queen, and was condemned to die on the following morning. Iwein espoused the cause of Lunete, and by the aid of his faithful lion vanquished her



accusers in the combat. Laudine, who did not recognize the victorious hero, besought him to remain with her some time. He did not yield to her wishes, and when she asked him his name, he told her that he was the knight with the lion. He left her, and in the course of his wanderings overcame two powerful giants, and freed three hundred maidens, who were imprisoned. In all his warlike adventures he was assisted by the strength of his faithful lion. Afterwards he arrived at Arthur's court and fought with Gawain, but without his lion, so that he should not be recognized. He had made himself the champion of a noble lady who had been deprived of her inheritance by her elder sister, and the cause of the latter had been espoused by Gawain. The issue of the combat remained doubtful for a long time, but at last the two knights recognized each other, and were surprised and delighted at their unexpected encounter. The dispute of the sisters was decided by Arthur, in accordance with justice, in favor of the younger lady. Great joy reigned at the court of the king, and Iwein, the knight with the lion, was admired by all.

Yet now an intense longing seized him for Laudine, and he went to the fountain. There he caused, in the manner indicated above, such a thunder-storm that the queen and her people were filled with anger and dismay. In this distress Laudine asked Lunete's advice. The latter told her that the knight with the lion, who had saved her from death, was the only one who could protect the queen against her foes ; but

his aid could only be obtained if Laudine would promise to reconcile him to his wife. The queen, without suspecting the cunning design of Lunete, gave the required promise by oath. Then Iwein appeared, and soon a sincere reconciliation took place between him and Laudine.

Hartmann's "Iwein" is not without its blemishes; but they, like the shortcomings of Wolfram and Gottfried, must be attributed to the character of the subject in the traditions, from which no Mediæval poet could venture to deviate to any great extent. There is no psychological motive for Iwein's sudden love of Laudine, nor for her almost immediate change of affection after Askalon had died. Indeed, there are several features in the legends of King Arthur, which by reason of the strange spirit that pervaded them must have been repugnant to the German poets. We may mention here only Ereke's (Geraint's) treatment of the innocent Enid. The general fantastic character of the Welsh stories may be given as a plea to extenuate Ereke's cruel and absurd behavior, yet for all that the subject is far from being refreshing. However, in Hartmann's "Iwein" the language is so beautiful, the narration flows so naturally and gracefully, and the style is so elegant and dignified, that we are led to admire the poet's talent, even when we can feel no great interest in the subject of the work.

Besides "Ereke" and "Iwein" Hartmann wrote two other epics; these are "Gregorius vom Steine" (Gregory of the Rock) and "Der arme Heinrich" (Poor Henry). The legend of Gregory was very well

known during the Middle Ages. It is a sort of Christian Œdipus story and cannot be repeated here. Its fundamental idea is that true repentance can atone for the greatest sins. The material of the "Poor Henry" is based on an old German saga, and was probably connected by the poet with a tradition in his family. The subject has been treated by Longfellow in one of his most beautiful works, "The Golden Legend."

Hartmann wrote, besides his epics, some very fine lyric poems, and the striking characteristic of nearly all of them is a certain manliness. In this respect he distinguished himself very favorably from most of the other Minnesänger, who often carried their sentimentality too far, so that their theme — the love of woman — and their doings appeared at last in an absurd manner, as can be seen in the work of Ulrich von Lichtenstein (who died in 1275). It is very probable that Hartmann was a native of Suabia, and was born about the year 1170. His earliest production was "Erek" and his last "Iwein." He was very popular among his contemporaries, and Gottfried von Strassburg bestowed great praise on him in the well-known passage of his "Tristan" in which he reviewed the German poets of his time. Rudolf von Ems (who died in 1254) was an imitator of Hartmann, and ranked his master among the famous poets of his age. Hartmann was one of the Crusaders under Barbarossa between the years 1189 and 1191, and wrote his "Erek" soon after his return to Germany, probably in the year 1193.\* He

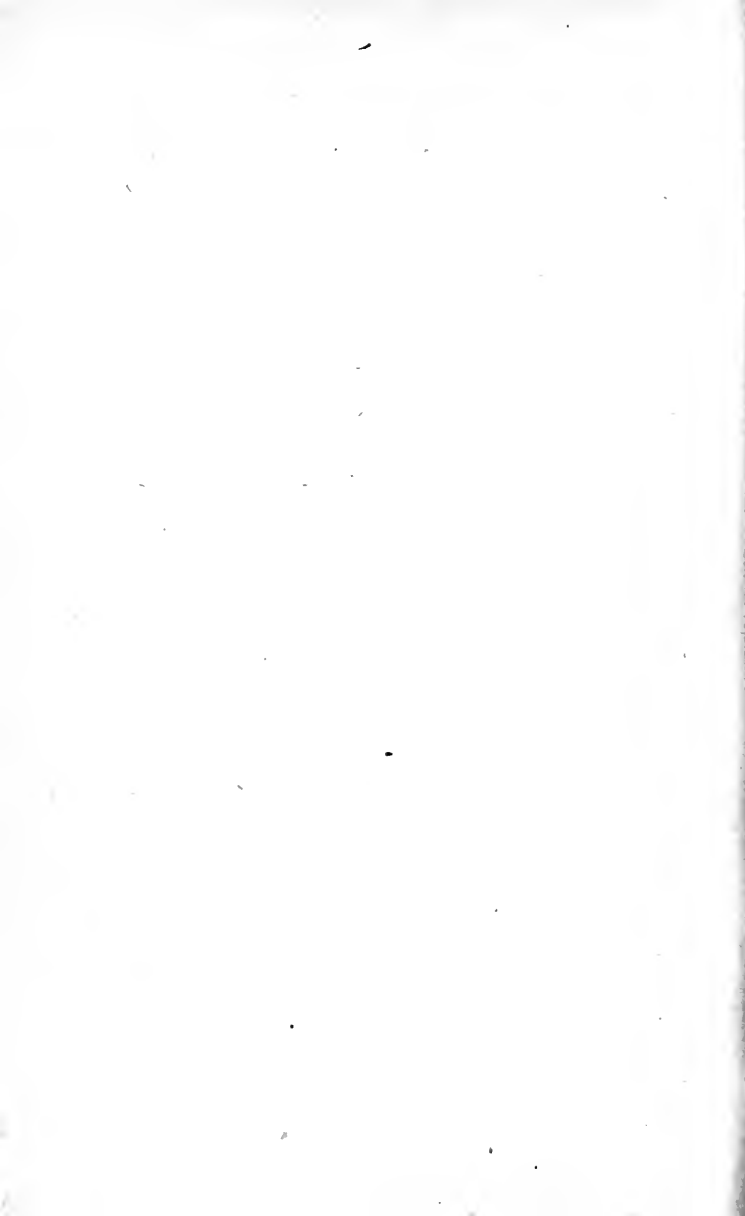
\* Cf. Fedor Bech's Introduction to his Hartmann von Aue, Vol. I.

was acquainted with the French language, and was also otherwise well educated. It seems that he died soon after the year 1212.

Wolfram, whom Friedrich Schlegel called the greatest German poet,\* reminds us of Dante and Klopstock, not only by the sublimity of his art, but by the lofty and at the same time profound ideas which form the foundation of his works, and especially of his "Parzival." But, like Dante and Klopstock, he often shrouds his thoughts in a mystic garb, the beauty of which is revealed only after a deep and persevering study. Gottfried was not inclined to contemplate with favor the earnest and sombre colors of life, but his whole soul dwelled with delight upon the apparently rosy-colored aspect of the world. His poetic creations seem to hover in a realm of pleasure, where little thought is bestowed on the realities of life and on the higher questions and aspirations of the human mind. Yet in regard to artistic form, pleasing and elegant manner, finish of style, and clearness and gracefulness of expression, Gottfried surpasses all his contemporaries, and in this respect is as different from Wolfram as Wieland is from Klopstock. Between the two extremes, exemplified by Wolfram and Gottfried, stands Hartmann von Aue, the knight and scholar, who belongs to the trio of the great court-poets of Mediæval Germany, and is the representative of the beautiful within its true limits. There is no doubt that the fame of these

\* An exaggerated statement. Wolfram is one of the greatest poets of Mediæval Germany.

masters would have spread beyond the boundaries of their native land, and that still greater renown might have been gained by the succeeding generation, if Germany under the Hohenstaufen emperors had been victorious in its wars with the Roman hierarchy. Yet, since the German kings became the successors of Augustus and the chiefs of the Holy Roman Empire, the prosperity and freedom of Germany were doomed to destruction. As the gold of the Nibelungs was a curse to its possessors, the imperial crown of Rome from the hands of the Pope proved to be fatal to the Teuton princes, in spite of all outward splendor. With the decline of the empire came the decline of German poetry.



## NOTES.

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1. (Cf. p. 90.) — In the two Eddas and in the Volsunga Saga nothing is said of Siegfried's invulnerability, while the latter fact is mentioned not only in the Nibelungen Lied, but in the Thidrek Saga, the lay of Siegfried, the Rosengarten, the popular book of Siegfried, and in other later traditions; yet the German poems "Biterolf" and "Die Klage" (The Lament) are silent about it. Although nothing is said of the horny skin in the two Eddas and in the Volsunga Saga, the origin of the tale of Siegfried's invulnerability may yet be connected with some ancient tradition. The comparison with the story of Achilles proves little, while on the other hand Raszmann's view on this point seems at least very probable. This eminent scholar points to the account of the Edda and Volsunga Saga, according to which Sigmund was so powerful a man that he might take poison without being hurt from it, while his sons, Sigurd and Sinfjötli, had so hard a skin that they could bear whatever poison came on the outside of their body, but could not drink it. Thus Sigurd was not hurt by Fafnir, although the latter snorted forth poison which fell on Sigurd's head as he stood in a pit when the dragon crept over it.\* "If we can assume," says Raszmann, "that this highly significant mythical characteristic of the mighty nature of the Volsungs was not added by the Northern nations, we are led

\* p. 64.

to think of the ancient custom of hardening swords by poison and armor by the blood of dragons and salamanders. In the fragments of the lay of Brynhild in the Edda, Brynhild says of Sigurd's sword, "Without were its edges wrought with fire, but with venom-drops deep dyed within;" and in the Volsunga Saga \* she speaks of "the sharp-edged sword that in poison had been made hard." When the saga took a coarser form, there could easily arise the conception that Siegfried's skin had been so hard that even a sword sharpened in poison could not wound him, and that he had bathed in the blood or in the melted horny skin of the dragon in order to obtain this wonderful property.† At all events, the horny skin is the rude conception of Siegfried's unconquerable strength.

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2. (Cf. p. 114.) — Professor K. Müllenhoff thinks that this representation of the revenge was brought about by the destruction of the (second) Burgundian realm by the Franks, which event he places in the year 583. He says: "The most essential point here is, that a Burgundian princess, Chrôdhild, instigated the Frankish kings, her sons, to the war with, and destruction of, her own race."‡ Clotild (Chrôdhild or Chrodichild) was the daughter of the Burgundian king, Chilperic, and was married in 493 to Clovis (Chlodoveg), king of the Franks, who died in the year 511; yet the Burgundians, who are reported to have been the object of the hatred of the widow of Clovis, were not her brothers, but the sons of Gundobad, the brother of her father Chilperic; and Gundobad, her uncle, is supposed, on the authority of Grégoire de Tours, to have put her parents to death about the year 490. It is a historic fact that the sons of Clovis and Clotild attacked and defeated Godomar and Sigismund, the sons of Gundobad, in a great battle in 523, and Sigismund and his family were thrown into a well, where they perished. However, Burgundy was not yet lost, for Godomar became king in 524,

\* Chapter XXXII.

† Vol. I. p. 138.

‡ Haupt's Zeitschrift, X. p. 179.



and routed the Franks in the same year, when Chlodomer, one of the sons of Clovis and Clotild, fell in the battle. Godomar bravely upheld his kingdom eight years longer, until Chlotar and Childebert, two other sons of Clovis and Clotild, again attacked Burgundy and completely conquered it. Godomar fled, and nothing certain is known of his end. Thus the final overthrow of the Burgundian kingdom took place in 532.

We cannot conclude that Müllenhoff's opinion is wrong from the mere fact that the victims of Clotild's supposed revenge were not her brothers, but the sons of her uncle; for the saga is very free in transforming historical events, and especially those of a secondary importance: in this case the Burgundian kings were, although not her brothers, yet of her own family. On the other hand, the accounts of Grégoire de Tours and of some of his Catholic contemporaries were not only strongly tinted by their abhorrence of the Arian Burgundians, but also by the current opinions of the time. Moreover Grégoire's report that Gundobad murdered his brother Chilperic, the father of Clotild, is without doubt utterly false, and therefore all the consequences drawn from that supposed murder, and particularly the stories about Clotild's revenge, are unhistorical. In this connection it seems proper to refer to the exhaustive and searching investigations in the early history of Burgundy by Carl Binding,\* by which much light has been thrown on the true relations of the Burgundian kings to one another and to the Franks. Nevertheless the fact of the partly legendary character of the histories of that epoch cannot be used as an argument against Müllenhoff's theory; on the contrary, it merely proves that popular tradition sought a cause for the overthrow of the Burgundians by the sons of a Burgundian princess, and naturally attributed the fall of Burgundy to the vengeance of Clotild on her kindred. In a similar manner, as we have seen above, Attila's sudden death by the side of his newly married wife was soon construed by the saga as having been caused by her, and then she became in the Northern

\* Geschichte des Burgundisch-Romanischen Königreichs von Carl Binding. Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann, 1868.

traditions the avenger of her brothers; thus the fact of the existence of these popular beliefs in regard to Clotild's revenge must rather be taken as an argument in favor of Müllenhoff's view. The chief objection raised against the opinion of this distinguished scholar is, that by accepting it we should be forced to assume that the primitive version of the saga, in which Atli betrays Gunnar and his house and is slain by his wife, had been transmitted to the Northern nations before the story of Clotild's vengeance became known and current among the people, that is, at least before the year 532, since the final overthrow of the Burgundian kingdom in Savoy by the Franks occurred at that time, as has been shown above. The supposition that the whole saga came at that early epoch (before 532) to the North is indeed contrary to the views of the best scholars on the subject; yet the theory that the tale of the revenge, as related in the *Nibelungen Lied*, was influenced by the story of Clotild need not therefore be relinquished. Considering that the saga was then in a constantly fluctuating condition, and that in different localities it was affected more or less by different circumstances, it is quite possible that in some regions, soon after Attila's death, the idea that he was murdered by his wife became prevalent, and was later transmitted to the North; while in other places the story of the revenge, as told in the German epic, gained ground in the manner indicated on page 128, and was probably influenced by the tale of Clotild. As we have said above,\* Müllenhoff puts the date of the destruction of the Burgundian realm by the sons of Clotild in the year 583. This date is merely a misprint, which however has not been detected by Professor R. von Muth, the author of an excellent and much needed compendium on the Nibelung subject † from Lachmann's point of view,‡ as he not only repeats the error on page 52 in quoting Müllenhoff's view, but, what is more important, argues upon that date on page 53 by

\* p. 292.

† *Einleitung in das Nibelungen Lied* von Richard von Muth. Paderborn, 1877.

‡ p. 140.

saying that the Northmen must have received the saga before the transformation of the motives of revenge in the *ninth decade* of the sixth century, and again on the same page states that the saga came to the North between 555 and 583.

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3. (Cf. p. 142.) — Although Holtzmann expressed in his work peculiar opinions about the origination of our poem, and the relation of the Nibelung story to the early epics of the Hindus, as well as on German and Keltic mythology, his view that C contained the earliest known text was accepted by many leading scholars in Germany. Among the latter we must mention here especially Friedrich Zarncke, who, before Holtzmann's book appeared, by independent investigation had come to the conclusion that A contained upon the whole the least trustworthy text. Zarncke explained his views more particularly in his inaugural address delivered at the University of Leipzig before entering on his professorship of German literature.\*

At that time a vehement controversy arose between the followers of Lachmann and his opponents, the former adhering to the text A and the theory of the twenty lays, and the latter defending the manuscript C and also generally asserting the unity of the poem. Many volumes have been written on this vexed question, and great scholarship has been displayed on both sides, while at the same time it must be regretted that the discussion has been often carried on with too much bitterness and positivism, and in a few instances sharp personalities have been exchanged. We may repeat here, that no one denies or can deny that our epic is at least based on ancient songs; but Lachmann's followers assert that the latter have been literally inserted in the poem, and that the remainder, as found in A, consist of interpolations. Besides, Lachmann not only declared A to contain the earliest text, but he would not admit that B and C had more than a

\* Zur Nibelungenfrage. Ein Vortrag gehalten in der Aula der Universität Leipzig am 28. Juli von Friedrich Zarncke. Nebst zwei Anhängen und einer Tabelle. Leipzig, 1854.

conjectural value. On the other hand, most of Lachmann's opponents contend that the ancient popular songs were merely the source of the poem, and that C represents the oldest text.

One of the most distinguished scholars that holds to Lachmann's view is Professor Karl Müllenhoff, of the University of Berlin, who published, in 1855, "Zur Geschichte der Nibelunge Nôt." A reply to his work will be found in "Literarisches Centralblatt, 1855," by Friedrich Zarncke; in "Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen, 1855," by Wilhelm Müller; and in Holtzmann's "Kampf um der Nibelunge Hort gegen Lachmann's Nachtreter, 1855." Those who delight in literary warfare are referred to the above-named works; and they will find them without doubt most edifying reading, while at the same time they will be richly repaid for their venture by the valuable information contained in them.

It does not come within the scope of this work to enter into any detailed account of the arguments and different shades of opinion of the leading scholars on the question of the manuscripts and of the composition of our epic; moreover, to thoroughly accomplish a task of that kind would require a volume much larger than the present. Yet we may state, in general, that while each school continued to defend its own theories and to attack those of the other, their arguments were chiefly based on internal evidence. Thus the adherents of one party tried to prove that the text in B and principally in C contained ameliorations brought about by the endeavor to bring the poem more in agreement with the ideas of Mediæval German refinement and chivalry, and that therefore B and C were later than A, while the opposing party attempted to show that A had become what it is by neglect and carelessness, and was later than B and C. In this connection it may also be said that many points in question are a matter of mere subjective opinion, and that there is no infallible criterion by which they can be decided. Besides the books and pamphlets published apart by the different scholars, Lachmann's opponents have often expressed their opinions on the subject in critical reviews in "Literarisches Centralblatt," edited by the eminent Professor

Friedrich Zarneke, and in the periodical "*Germania*," of which many volumes have now appeared, while the views of Lachmann's school can be found in Haupt's "*Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*." The two last-named works are highly recommended to all students of Old German literature, as they contain original and learned articles, not only on the *Nibelungen Lied*, but also on the other great and minor poems of that era.

A new animation entered into the discussions of the German scholars, when in 1862 the startling announcement was made by Franz Pfeiffer, the founder of the periodical "*Germania*," that the poet of the *Nibelungen Lied* had been discovered. The latter was supposed to be no other than "*der Von Kürnberg*" or "*der Kürnberg*," a knight under whose name we possess thirteen stanzas, which agree in form exactly with the *Nibelung stanza*.\* They are found in the famous Parisian manuscript collection of Mediæval German lyrics, which was formerly called "*Manessische Liederhandschrift*."† The names of various authors, both of real personages, as Wolfram von Eschenbach and Konrad von Würzburg, and of imaginary characters like *Klinsor* of Hungary, had been imputed to our epic ever since it had been rediscovered by Bodmer. Yet the question was elevated into a more scientific sphere only through Pfeiffer, and the honor of having first based the theory of the "*Kürnberg*" on at least very plausible arguments belongs entirely to him. It is true that the first mention of the *Kürnberg* in connection with the *Nibelungen Lied* was made by F. J. Mone as early as 1826,‡

\* Cf. p. 148.

† This collection is the richest, but not the earliest of Mediæval German lyrics (*Minnegeang*), the most important one being at Heidelberg. The former was named after Rüdiger Manesse, a knight of the noble and wealthy house of Manesse, and a Councillor at Zürich, who together with his eldest son was presumed to have made that collection. The supposition was based on the mere general statement that they collected books of songs. Cf. August Koberstein's *Geschichte der deutschen Nationalliteratur*, 5th edition, Vol. I. p. 219, Note 10.

‡ *Badisches Archiv*, Vol. I. pp. 53, 54.

but Pfeiffer was probably not aware of it; and in fact Mone's opinion had not attracted much attention, nor was it further developed and examined. Holtzmann\* alluded to the Kürenberger, and said that if a poet could be found who employed the Nibelung stanza about the year 1200, there would be great probability that he was the author of the Nibelungen Lied. He declared that he knew but one poet — the Kürenberger — who had used that versification; but from the rhyme and language he belonged to an earlier date than our epic. Pfeiffer, referring to these remarks of Holtzmann, asserted that the latter had come very near the truth; and as the stanzas ascribed to the Kürenberger cannot be placed later than 1150, he assumed that our epic in its present shape is a remodelling of an earlier original work, the author of which is the Kürenberger. The Parisian manuscript gives no Christian name of the poet, and as there lived several members of this family in the vicinity of Linz in Austria, it is not certain which one of them is meant. Pfeiffer supposed that it was Magenes von Kürnberg (1120–1140), while Thausing† believed that it was Konrad von Kürnberg (1140–1147).

As a general reason why the Kürenberger is in all probability not the author of our poem, we may state here that popular epics have no author in the ordinary sense of the word. They are, as has been said before, the poetic document of popular feeling and tradition, being based on ancient national lays, the authors of which were unknown and disappeared behind their work, as they were merely the preservers of the old folk-lore. In the popular epics we also find generally that they begin with a reference to tradition and close with the name of the work, as can be seen in the Nibelungen Lied. On the other hand the composers of the court epics treated with preference foreign stories, and distinctly displayed their individuality, while they gave their names

\* Untersuchungen über das Nibelungenlied, pp. 185, 186.

† Nibelungenstudien in "Oesterreichische Wochenschrift, 1864, Nos. 2–5."

at the beginning or at the end of their poems. Again there are many allusions and distinct references to the great Mediæval German poets in contemporaneous and later productions, especially in Gottfried's "Tristan und Isold;" and yet never is the Kürenberger or any other poet mentioned as the author of our epic. Indeed it is not probable that such would have been the case if he had been known.

While these general reasons cannot be called decisive, since what appears nearly impossible might nevertheless have happened in a particular case, namely, in regard to the authorship of the Nibelungen Lied, we may briefly refer to the most important argument of Pfeiffer in favor of his theory; yet it will be proper to give first one of the stanzas ascribed to the Kürenberger, as it is of great value for our purpose. The stanza is found in "Minnesangs Frühling," 8, 1-8 and reads as follows: —

"Ich stuont mir nehtint spate an einer zinnen;  
Dô hôrt ich einen ritter vil wol singen  
In Kürenberges wise al uz der menigîn.  
Er muoz mir diu lant rûmen, ald ich geniete mich sîn."

"I late at eve was standing high on a battlement;  
There I a knight heard singing full well with sentiment  
In Kürenberger's stanza from out the crowded throng.  
The knight must leave these regions, else I be his erelong."

Of course it is a lady who is here introduced as speaking, probably the wife of another, and a powerful princess: she commands the knight to depart from her lands, since she fears to yield to his love; and the whole passage seems to depict her inward struggle. Vollmöller\* and others declare, against Pfeiffer, that from the above stanza it is only evident that there was a "Kürenberges wise," but not how it was, nor consequently that it was identical with the Nibelung verse. Moreover Vollmöller asserts that the heading "der von Kürenbere," which precedes the songs ascribed to the latter in the Parisian manuscript, was inserted there on a mere inference from the phrase

\* Kürenberg und die Nibelungen. Eine gekrönte Preisschrift. Stuttgart, 1874.

“in Kürenberges wise,” and does not prove that the Kürenberger was the author of those songs; at the same time he shows, what is an undeniable fact, that several poets had been wrongly imputed as authors of various productions found in the Parisian, Heidelberg, and other manuscripts of Mediæval German lyrics.\* Nevertheless this latter fact does not convey any conclusive evidence in regard to the poems attributed to the Kürenberger. Vollmöller also declares that “wise” denoted primarily the melody of a song, and not necessarily its metrical form; yet this is by no means certain, since “wise” occurs at least quite often as a technical term for stanza, from the time of Nother (died 1022) down to the Mastersingers, as has been shown by Scherer.† The last-named writer maintains that it is not proved at all that it is the Kürenberger himself who sings, and he reasons somewhat like this: if we hear any one singing, for instance, in the melody of Nægeli, we do not imagine we hear that composer singing, but, on the contrary, some one else. Again it has been asserted by Zupitza ‡ that the assumption of the Kürenberger’s singing would imply a breach of etiquette (*unzuht*), since, according to the customs of the refined society of the time, it was forbidden to mention the name of the beloved one, of the knight or of the lady. Yet there does not seem to be such a breach of etiquette in this instance, as the knight certainly does not name the lady, nor does the latter really speak and mention the name of the former; but the knight merely represents her as saying those words, and puts them in the direct discourse in which he himself then appears as the person spoken of and not the person addressed. Upon the whole, in spite of Vollmöller’s and Scherer’s statements, the most natural interpretation of the above stanza, taken in connection with the succeeding verses, implies that the songs ascribed to the Kürenberger were really composed by that poet, while it is evident that the metre of the Nibelungen

\* Vollmöller, pp. 37–41.

† Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum, Vol. XVII. 561–581.

‡ Ueber Franz Pfeiffer’s Versuch, den Kürenberger als den Dichter der Nibelungen zu erweisen. Oppeln, 1862.



Lied is identical with the versification of those songs, that is, with the "Kürenberges wise."

Pfeiffer's main argument was that at that time no poet could appropriate the metrical form invented by another, and that therefore, as the versification of the *Nibelungen Lied* and of the *Kürenberger* songs is the same, the author of the latter must also be the author of the former; of course, not of the epic in the form in which it has been transmitted to us, but, as has been said above, of an earlier original work. Pfeiffer's assumption as to the exclusive right of ownership of a new metrical form has been refuted, especially by Vollmöller,\* who showed beyond doubt that such a law did not exist in the twelfth century, but that, on the contrary, the same form of stanza could be and had been used by both epic and lyric poets. It was only during the thirteenth century, when lyric poetry had reached the height of its development, that this right of authorship was observed. Vollmöller says very correctly: "The manifoldness of the forms of stanzas in the Middle High German lyrics has its origin in the endeavor to vary as much as possible the poetical forms in order to avoid the objection of monotony. Great richness in forms must supply the deficiency of new thoughts. Besides the metrical form, the air was also the poet's creation and property. The latter no one could appropriate to himself with impunity in the thirteenth century, yet stanzas metrically alike could have different airs." Pfeiffer, besides the theory of the ownership of a metrical form, has indicated other reasons to support his hypothesis, as the agreement in figures, phraseology, and the peculiar use of words in the *Kürenberger* songs and in the *Nibelungen Lied*; yet this agreement or resemblance is also found in other poems, and therefore does not carry with it the force of a proof. In conclusion, we may also say that according to Vollmöller † the name "Kürenberg" was a very common one in Austria and other parts of Germany, and he has enumerated more than twenty castles and villages which bore that name during the Middle Ages.

\* Vollmöller, pp. 9-16.

† Ibid., pp. 41, 42.

It is hardly necessary to say that Lachmann's followers from their point of view could not but scorn the idea of the Kurenberger; yet even among those who believe in a real poet of the Nibelungen Lied, Pfeiffer found but few scholars who shared his opinion. Among the latter the most distinguished is Karl Bartsch, who moreover in 1862 presented, at the meeting of philologists at Augsburg, a new theory of the composition of our epic, which was further developed when it appeared in print in 1865.\* The investigations of Bartsch are mainly based on the rhyme, that is, on the comparatively few instances where so-called impure or apparently female rhymes occur, as *Hagene*, *degene*, etc. He thinks that these rhymes must belong to an earlier date than the Nibelungen Lied in its present shape, and that they are relics of the original work. Thus, according to his opinion, the first composition of our epic took place between 1140 and 1150, and was followed at about 1170 by a reconstruction, including the purification of a great part of the rhymes. From the latter work came independently B and C, between 1190 and 1200; the former manuscript being more faithful to the original than the latter. A reply to the announcement of this hypothesis was made, especially by Zarneke.† His view is that if a poem has been twice reconstructed for the sole purpose of improving its form, it is certainly more improbable that such rhymes as were contrary to the custom of the time remained, than that a poet, creating the work anew, left now and then some antiquated forms standing. Moreover, Zarneke shows that impure or inexact rhymes occur even in court epics; for instance, in Wolfram's "Parzival," 53, 19, *gābe*, *māge*, and in other passages. Nevertheless the work of Bartsch is highly instructive, and contains many valuable suggestions, while the erudition displayed in regard to metre and rhythm is remarkable. Yet when Bartsch attempts to restore what is, according to his opinion, the lost original, we must agree with Zarneke, whose judgment that the investigations of Bartsch contain too bold conjectures is in this respect no doubt correct.

\* Untersuchungen über das Nibelungen Lied. Wien, 1865.

† Introduction to his fifth edition of the Nibelungen Lied, p. l.

As has been said above, Bartsch at first appeared to adopt Pfeiffer's hypothesis of the Kürenberger, yet later he emphatically denied that he ever considered it an established fact.\*

4. (Cf. p. 148.)—German scholars are not agreed on this point. Some assert that the first hemistich of every line has four accents, and the schema of this form would be :—

/     /     /     /             /     /     /  
 /     /     /     /             /     /     /  
 /     /     /     /             /     /     /  
 /     /     /     /             /     /     /     /

Thus the first stanza of the Nibelungen Lied is by them accented as follows :—

Uns ist in álten maérén    wúnders víl geseít  
 Von héleden lóbebaérén,    von grózer árebeít;  
 Von freúde und hó'chgezi'tén,    von wéinen únde hlágen,  
 Von kü'ener récken strí'tén    muget ír nu wúnder hoéren ságen.

It will be seen that in this manner the ringing cæsura counts for two accented syllables. It is a fact that several hemistichs must be read according to this rule, although some scholars would allow to the last syllable only a secondary accent, if any at all. We simply refer here to a few passages, as 2, 7,† “von ír vil hôhen wérdekeit;” 19, 1, “er móhte Hágenen swéstersún.” There are also some hemistichs in the second half of the first three lines which have four accents. In conclusion, we may say that Lachmann has distinguished himself pre-eminently by his investigations of the structure of the Old German verse. The result of his labors forms still the fundamental principle on which more recent works on this subject are based. We may mention here Lachmann's essay, “Ueber althochdeutsche Betonung und Vers-

\* Germania, XIX.

† In Zarneke's fifth edition of the Nibelungen Lied, based on Manuscript C.

kunst, I Abtheilung, gelesen in der Berliner Akademie am 21. April, 1832" (On Old High German Accentuation and Versification, Section I., read in the Academy of Berlin on April 21, 1832), and also his "Anmerkungen" (Notes) to Iwein, Nibelungen, Walther, etc., in which very valuable remarks on this important branch of study can be found. Besides Lachmann there are other scholars who deserve great praise for the elucidation of the subject. We refer to the Introductions of Zarneke and Bartsch to their respective editions of the Nibelungen Lied, and also to the Introduction of Bartsch to his edition of Gudrun (Kudrun).

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5. (Cf. p. 151.) — The production which must be mentioned here first, chiefly because it is the earliest and comes from a justly renowned poet, is De la Motte Fouqué's "Sigurd der Schlangentöchter" (Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer), published in 1808. It is divided into six *adventures*: this term, taken from the Nibelungen Lied, is of course used instead of *act*, probably also to indicate that the play, which is written in the form of a drama, in the course of its action resembles more the nature of an epic. Fouqué used in some instances the story of the Nibelungen Lied, but generally availed himself of the material supplied by the Northern traditions; thus, in the last act, after Sigurd's death, Brynhild stabs herself with his sword and rushes into the flames of the funeral pyre. Gunnar's mother plays an important part in the work, and the effect of the magic drink is well described. Sigurd has taken a draught from the goblet and exclaims, —

"What has become of me ?

From my remembrance something passed away.

Even now I could recall it well ; and dear

It was to me, dear to my deepest heart.

But all at once it fled my mind ; it fell,

As 't were, into the bottomless great sea.

I wander by the shore ; pray let me seek it."

At the instigation of Gunnar's mother he empties the goblet, and the past — his love of Brynhild — is shrouded in impene-

trable darkness. In partial accordance with the Nibelungen Lied, Sigurd, riding in advance of the royal party, announces the approach of Brynhild and Gunnar. In the meantime the effect of the magic drink has gradually become weaker, and, while standing alone by himself, he speaks thus : —

“ Why am I not with them ? What holds me here ?  
 Is it again that vain and idle musing  
 On things that long ago fled from my thought  
 And yet in recollection dim now stir my soul ?  
 Lo ! as the watchman from the tower announced  
 The youthful queen’s approach, my mind anew  
 Was turned upon — the wavering fire. — What was it ?  
 It’s growing more distinct ; and for some time  
 The mist has e’er rolled backwards more and more.  
 I rode — upon my troth I once before  
 Rode through the glowing, flickering flame — and found  
 A blessed pang ; — its name was ? — Hark, the trumpets !  
 They come. I must be hence. But only this,  
 But this I will recall ; I am quite near ; —  
 Its name ? — The tumult gives me now no rest.  
 I’ll go to meet them — Brynhild comes ! — Brynhild ?  
 She there ? And is it she ? It was Sigdrifa !  
 Yet she was mine. And what ? — Now Gunnar’s wife ?  
 Ha, Gunnar ! *Brandishing his sword.*  
 No, oh no, ’tis Gudrun’s brother !  
 How is it ? — Now it is becoming plain.  
 My dearest love, my Brynhild ! Lo ! the clouds  
 Of darkness are withdrawing from my mind.  
 Alas, too late ! I have another wife,  
 I have a son. Oh, were it all a dream !  
 Awake me, wake me ! — Woe ! I am awake.  
 My love is pledged, and broken is my word.  
 My troth now holds me here and draws me thither.  
 Oh ! I am lost. —  
 I feel it now, with magic draught of ill  
 I was deceived ; I for another gained  
 The one who was my life ! — Be calm, my soul ;  
 With calmness, Volsung, bear what can’t be changed ! ”

There are also many lyrical stanzas with alliterative verses in the poem, some of which are not without a certain beauty in form and idea; and upon the whole Fouqué's work was at least a fair beginning in the endeavor to reproduce the ancient Nibelung traditions. No such favorable opinion can be held of "*Attila; a Romantic Tragedy*," published in 1812 by Zacharias Werner, who makes the king of the Huns a relative of the Burgundians, bestows on him Odin's sword as a sword of judgment, introduces Pope Leo into the play, and otherwise presents a picture of strange incongruities, although a very few scenes are conceived and composed in a highly poetic spirit.

Besides Fouqué's and Werner's poems there are five dramas which comprise the whole or nearly the whole of the Nibelung story. They were written, respectively, by F. R. Hermann (1819), F. W. Müller (1822), C. F. Eichhorn (1824), Ernst Raupach (1834), and Friedrich Hebbel (1824; 3d edition, 1874). It must be admitted that *Hermann*, a pupil of Von der Hagen, was filled with great enthusiasm for the old hero saga, as can be seen from the Preface to his work; yet his poem has few artistic merits. In Siegfried appears a sentimental Christianity combating with a sort of romantic fatalism; in fact, Hermann thought he perceived the Greek fate in the story of the Nibelungen Lied. At the same time the language not infrequently lacks nobleness of expression, and the versification is often rude. The play is based partly on the lay of Siegfried, partly on the Nibelungen Lied, and in some instances on the Northern traditions, all, however, with not a few arbitrary and at times infelicitous changes. Compared with Hermann's production, *Müller's* tragedy, "*Chriemhild's Rache*," is an improvement in many respects; the language is dignified and refined, and on the whole the play is conceived with much poetic spirit. Yet it is mostly of the poet's own invention, and reminds us rarely of the contents of the Nibelung saga. Müller, justifying his attempt by referring to Schiller's "*Braut von Messina*," introduces the chorus in his tragedy, and makes it act as a mere tool in the hands of Kriemhild. In *Eichhorn's* drama peals of thunder resound twelve

times, an earthquake takes place, and a comet appears; moreover, there is a storm on the Rhine, and there are apparitions of the ghosts of Siegfried, Brunhild, and Ute. Many other wonderful things happen, and the object of the author seemed to be mere sensational effect. His work is unique in its kind, and it is to be hoped it will remain so.

*Ernst Raupach*, who is reported to have written more than seventy dramas, published in 1834 his tragedy "Der Nibelungen Hort," which was the first of the modern Nibelung poems that have been represented on the stage, where for several years it met with great success. It is above the average Nibelung drama, yet not without some blemishes. The quarrel between the queens is devoid of royal dignity and becomes a mere brawl. Kriemhild had promised Siegfried by a solemn oath not to marry again, and she hears of Etzel's wooing only after Gunther had already, from political reasons, pledged her hand to the powerful king of the Huns. She begs Gunther not to compel her to commit perjury, and lowers herself so far as on her knees to supplicate Brunhild to espouse her cause. Brunhild's reply is harsh and cynical, and in Kriemhild's soul arise thoughts of vengeance. Etzel submits to her will when she declares that she refuses to become his wife until he has revenged her wrong on her kindred. The wedding is celebrated near Worms, in the camp of the Huns, where all the Burgundians are slain. Brunhild with her son falls into the power of her foes, and afterwards throws herself with him into the Rhine. Etzel goes to Kriemhild and apprises her of the accomplished revenge; she stabs him with her dagger and in her turn is killed by the Huns. *Hebbel's* tragedy, "Die Nibelungen," has been variously judged by art critics. Although Hebbel from his early youth had taken great interest in the Nibelung story, he was particularly induced to write his work by the admiration which he felt at seeing his wife play with remarkable success the part of Kriemhild in Raupach's tragedy. Nevertheless Hebbel spoke in disparagement of the latter poem, and asserted that Raupach was not a son of Apollo. When we compare Hebbel's drama with the material of the Nibelung saga, and consider what

might be done with it by a great poet, we must confess that Hebbel did not achieve anything very noteworthy. Without doubt there are several scenes which are skilfully and even very artistically arranged, and the play, like that of Raupach, is well adapted for theatrical representations, while at the same time it must be admitted that Hebbel was a painstaking and gifted writer. Yet when we inquire how he has done justice to the traditions on which his work is based, the answer is not always in favor of the poet. Thus let us take, for instance, the scene of Siegfried's death and last farewell, as found in the *Nibelungen Lied*, when Siegfried says, —

“ But naught grieves me so greatly as Dame Kriemhild, my wife ; ”  
or again, —

“ My bloody, murderous death  
You will have cause to grieve for in time to come, I trow.  
You may believe me truly : you 've struck your own death-blow.”

Now what shall we think of Hebbel's Siegfried, who before dying exclaims, —

“ You e'er shall be included in the people's curses,  
And they will say, ‘ Toads, vipers, and Burgundians ! ’  
But no, ye first : Burgundians, vipers, toads ! ”

In Hebbel's poem, moreover, several lines which precede those just quoted are still worse, and Hagen's remarks after Siegfried's death are simply rude and unpoetical. Besides the dramas mentioned above, there are four *Kriemhild tragedies*, in which Siegfried's widow is distinctly the central figure of action. They were composed, respectively, by R. Reimar (1853), W. Hosäus (1866), Fr. Arnd (1875), and R. Sigismund (1875). There exist also three *Brunhild dramas*, whose respective authors are Emanuel Geibel (1857 ; 4th edition, 1877), R. Waldmüller (1863), and R. Sigismund (1875). Finally we may mention the *Rüdiger dramas*, written by L. Schenk (1866), W. Osterwald (1863), and F. Daln (1875). There is also an anonymous drama entitled “ Helke,” in which appear Etzel, his wife Helke, Rüdiger, Dietrich, Hildebrand, and Rüdiger's wife Gotelind. It



is by no means necessary for our purpose to review here these dramatic productions, since none of them, except Geibel's poem, betrays any brilliant genius, although most show very remarkable improvement compared with the works briefly referred to above.

6. (Cf. p. 210.)

There was Gudrun, Juki's daughter, with the warlike game delighted;  
The more men Högni hewed asunder, the more were quickly reunited.  
There was Högni, Juki's son; he good heed of this was taking.  
Those whom he had slain in daytime, she was e'er at night awaking.

7. (Cf. p. 212.) — As scholars differ in regard to the Nibelung stanza,\* so they differ also about the Gudrun stanza. Some assert that the ringing cæsura and the female rhymes must each have two accents. The first stanza of the poem would then be accented as follows: —

Ez wúohs in Írlandé ein rí'cher kü'nic hê'r.  
Geheizen wás er Sígebánt, sín váter dér hiez Gê'r.  
Sín múoter díu hiez Úoté, und wás ein kü'niginné.  
Dúrh ir hô'he tûgendé sô' gezám dem rí'chen wól ir mínné.

8. (Cf. p. 226.) — The dedication reads as follows: —

TO IVOR AND MERTHYR.

MY DEAR CHILDREN, — Infants as you yet are, I feel that I cannot dedicate more fitly than to you these venerable relics of ancient lore, and I do so in the hope of inciting you to cultivate the literature of "Gwylt Walia," in whose beautiful language you are being initiated, and amongst whose free mountains you were born.

May you become early imbued with the chivalric and exalted sense of honor and the fervent patriotism for which its sons have ever been celebrated.

May you learn to emulate the noble qualities of Ivor Hael, and the firm attachment to your native country which distinguished that Ivor Bach after whom the elder of you was named.

I am your affectionate mother,

DOWLAIS, Aug. 29, 1838.

C. E. GUEST.

\* See p. 303.

9. (Cf. p. 253.) — The story of "Peredur the son of Evrawc" is contained in the second part of the first volume of the *Mabinogion* from the "*Llyfr Coch O Hergest*," or "*The Red Book of Hergest*," edited and translated by Lady Charlotte Guest and preserved in the library of Jesus College, Oxford. A brief sketch of the story is given here.\*

Earl Evrawc, the ruler of the North, had seven sons. He was slain, and six of his sons likewise. The name of the seventh son was Peredur, and his mother fled with him to the deserts, to guard him against the dangers of war. No one was permitted to bring either horses or arms where he was. One day they saw three knights coming along the road on the borders of the forest. They were Gwalchmai, son of Gwyar, Geneir Gwystyl, and Owain, the son of Urien. "Mother," said Peredur, "what are those yonder?" "They are angels," said she. "By my faith," said Peredur, "I will go and become an angel with them." At Peredur's request, Owain explained to him all about his accoutrements of war, his weapons, and their uses. Peredur said to his mother, "Those men were not angels, but honorable knights." Then his mother swooned away. Peredur took a horse and with twisted twigs imitated the trappings which he had seen upon the horses of the knights. Before he took leave of his mother, she counselled him in about the same manner as Herzeloide advised her son before he left her.

Peredur mounted his horse, and, taking a handful of sharp-pointed forks in his hand, rode forth. After two days and two nights he came to a vast wildwood, and within the wood he saw a glade. In the latter he beheld a tent, and, the tent seeming to him to be a church, he repeated, according to his mother's advice, his Paternoster. Near the open door of the tent sat a lovely maiden, and Peredur entered the tent, where he saw meat and wine. "My mother told me," he said to the lady, "wheresoever I saw meat and drink, to take it." When he had finished eating, he bent on his knee before the lady. "My mother," said he, "told me, wheresoever I saw a fair jewel, to

\* Condensed from Lady Guest's translation.

take it." Peredur took her ring and then proceeded on his journey. After this came the knight who was the lord of the glade. He saw the track of Peredur's horse and asked her, "Did he offer thee any wrong?" The lady answered, "By my faith, he harmed me not." But the knight replied, "I do not believe thee; and until I can meet with him and revenge the insult he has done me and wreak my vengeance on him, thou shalt not remain two nights in the same house." The knight arose and set forth to seek Peredur.

Meanwhile Peredur arrived at Arthur's court, where just before a knight had dashed the wine from a golden goblet in the face of Gwenhwyvar, and said, "If any have the boldness to dispute this goblet with me, and to revenge the insult to Gwenhwyvar, let him follow me to the meadow, and there I will await him." All the household of King Arthur hung down their heads, lest any of them should be requested to avenge the insult. Then Peredur entered the hall on his bony horse with the uncouth trappings, and asked Sir Kai where King Arthur was. Sir Kai answered him in an impolite manner, and the people of the household threw sticks at Peredur. Then a dwarf came forward; he had been a year at Arthur's court, both he and a female dwarf, and during the whole year neither of them had spoken a single word to any one. When the dwarf beheld Peredur, he said, "The welcome of Heaven be to thee, goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc, the chief of warriors and the flower of knighthood." Kai upbraided the dwarf in harsh language, and gave him such a blow that he fell senseless to the ground. Then the female dwarf repeated the exclamation, and was also severely punished by Kai. The latter said to Peredur, "Go after the knight who went hence to the meadow, and take from him the goblet, and overthrow him, and possess thyself of his horse and arms, and then thou shalt receive the order of knighthood." Peredur slew the knight, and Owain went after him to the meadow, where he found Peredur dragging the man about. "This iron coat," said Peredur, "will never come off him." Owain unfastened the armor and bade Peredur come with him to Arthur to receive the order of knight-

hood. But Peredur said, "Take thou the goblet to Gwenhwyvar, and tell Arthur that wherever I am, I will be his vassal; yet I will not come to his court until I have encountered the tall man that is there, to revenge the injury he did to the dwarf and dwarfess." Peredur rode forward and met a knight who was an enemy of Arthur. They fought with each other and Peredur brought the knight to the ground. He commanded him to go to Arthur's court, and tell the king that he had been overthrown by Peredur for the honor of his service, and that Peredur would not come to the court until he had avenged the insult offered to the dwarf and dwarfess. During that week Peredur encountered sixteen knights and overthrew them all. They went to Arthur's court, taking with them the same message which the first knight had received from Peredur, and the same threat which he had sent to Kai. Thereupon Kai was reprov'd by Arthur, and he was greatly grieved. Afterwards Peredur came to the castle of a venerable, hoary-headed man,\* who said to him, "Thou shalt remain with me a space in order to learn the manners and customs of different countries, and courtesy, and gentleness, and noble bearing. Leave, then, the habits and discourse of thy mother, and I will be thy teacher. If thou seest aught to cause thee wonder, ask not the meaning of it: if no one has the courtesy to inform thee, the reproach will not fall on thee, but on me that am thy teacher."

Afterwards Peredur rode forth and came to a vast desert wood. At the farther end of the wood was a meadow, and on the other side of the meadow he saw a large castle. Peredur found the gate open and proceeded to the hall. He beheld a stately man sitting on one side of the hall, with many pages around him, who arose to receive and honor Peredur; and they placed him by the side of the owner of the palace. The latter asked Peredur after the banquet whether he could fight with a sword. "Were I to receive instruction," said Peredur, "I think I could." There was on the floor of the hall a huge staple, as

\* At first he seems to be the same as Anfortas, but he really corresponds to Gurnemanz.

large as a warrior could grasp. "Take yonder sword," said the man to Peredur, "and strike the iron staple." Peredur arose and struck the staple so that he cut it in two: and the sword broke into two parts also. "Place the two parts together," said the man, "and reunite them." Peredur placed them together and they became entire, as they were before. A second time he struck upon the staple so that both it and the sword broke in two, and as before they reunited. The third time he gave a like blow, and placed the broken parts together, but neither the staple nor the sword would unite as before. "Youth," said the man, "come now and sit down, and my blessing be upon thee. Thou fightest best with the sword of any man in the kingdom. Thou hast arrived at two thirds of thy strength, and the other third thou hast not yet obtained; but when thou attainest to thy full power, none will be able to contend with thee. I am thy uncle, thy mother's brother, and I am brother to the man in whose house thou wast last night."

While Peredur and his uncle discoursed together, he beheld two youths enter the hall and proceed up to the chamber, bearing a spear of mighty size, with three streams of blood flowing from the point to the ground. When all the company saw this, they began wailing and lamenting; but for all that the man did not break off his discourse with Peredur. As he did not tell Peredur the meaning of what he saw, he forbore to ask him concerning it. When the clamor had a little subsided, behold two maidens entered, with a large salver between them, in which was a man's head, surrounded by a profusion of blood. Thereupon the company of the court made so great an outcry that it was irksome to be in the same hall with them; but at length they were silent. When it was time for them to sleep, Peredur was brought into a fair chamber. The next day, with his uncle's permission, he rode forth. He came to a wood, and far within the wood he heard a loud cry, and saw a beautiful woman with auburn hair, a horse with a saddle upon it standing near her, and a corpse by her side. As she strove to place the corpse on the horse, it fell to the ground, and thereupon

she made a great lamentation. "Tell me, sister," said Peredur, "wherefore art thou bewailing?" "Oh, accursed Peredur! little pity has my ill fortune ever met with from thee." "Wherefore," said he, "am I accursed?" The woman replied: "Because thou wast the cause of thy mother's death; for when thou didst ride forth against her will, anguish seized upon her heart so that she died; and therefore art thou accursed. The dwarf and the dwarfess that thou sawest at Arthur's court were the dwarfs of thy father and mother. I am thy foster-sister, and this was my wedded husband, who was slain by the knight that is in the glade in the wood." Peredur buried the body of the lady's husband, went in quest of the knight, and overthrew him. Then he forced him to marry the woman and go to Arthur's court bearing a defiant message to Kai. When the knight arrived at Arthur's court and told the king what had happened, Arthur exclaimed: "By my faith! I will search all the deserts in the island of Britain until I find Peredur, and then let him and his adversary do their utmost to each other."

Then Peredur rode forward, and at the end of a desert wood he saw a vast castle. The lady of the castle was in great distress on account of the hostile knights who surrounded her dominion. She asked Peredur's help, and he defeated her enemies. Afterwards he met a lady mounted on a horse that was lean and covered with sweat. Peredur said to her, "Behold, I am the knight through whom thou art in trouble, and he shall repent it who has treated thee thus." Then Peredur saw the lord of the lady, and they were not long in combat ere Peredur overthrew the knight, and he besought his mercy. "Mercy thou shalt have," said Peredur, "so thou wilt return by the way thou camest and declare that thou holdest the maiden innocent, and so thou wilt acknowledge unto her the reverse thou hast sustained at my hands." And the knight plighted him his faith thereto.

Peredur rode forward, and above him he beheld a castle, whither he went. He struck upon the gate with his lance, and a comely, auburn-haired youth opened the gate, who had

the stature of a warrior and the years of a boy. And when Peredur came into the hall, there was a tall and stately lady sitting in a chair, with many handmaidens around her; and the lady rejoiced at his coming. After the repast was finished, she said, "It were well for thee, chieftain, to go elsewhere to sleep." "Wherefore can I not sleep here?" said Peredur. The lady replied, "Nine sorceresses are here, of the sorceresses of Gloucester, and unless we can make our escape before daybreak we shall be slain; and already they have conquered and laid waste all the country except this one dwelling." Peredur said, "I will remain here to-night, and if you are in trouble I will do you what service I can; but harm shall you not receive from me." With the break of day he heard a dreadful outcry, and saw a sorceress overtake one of the watch, who cried out violently. Peredur struck the sorceress upon the head with his sword, so that he flattened her helmet and her headpiece, like a dish, upon her head. She said, "Thy mercy, goodly Peredur, son of Evrawc, and the mercy of Heaven!" He replied, "How knowest thou, hag, that I am Peredur?" The sorceress spoke: "By destiny, and the foreknowledge that I should suffer harm from thee. And thou shalt take a horse and armor of me, and with me thou shalt go to learn chivalry and the use of thy arms." Peredur said, "Thou shalt have mercy if thou pledge thy faith thou wilt nevermore injure the dominions of the countess." And Peredur took surety of this, and set forth to the palace of the sorceresses. There he remained for three weeks, and then made choice of a horse and arms and went his way.

In the evening he entered a valley and came to a hermit's cell; the hermit welcomed him gladly, and there he spent the night. In the morning he arose; and when he went forth, he found that a shower of snow had fallen the night before, and a hawk had killed a wild fowl in front of the cell. The noise of the horse scared the hawk away, and a raven alighted upon the bird. And Peredur stood and compared the blackness of the raven, the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair

of the lady that best he loved, which was blacker than jet, and to her skin, which was whiter than snow, and to the two red spots on her cheeks, which were redder than the blood on the snow appeared to be.

Now Arthur and his household were in search of Peredur. "Know ye," said Arthur, "who is the knight with the long spear, that stands by the brook up yonder?" Then a youth went to the place where Peredur was, and asked him what he was doing there and who he was. But from the intensity with which he thought upon the lady whom best he loved, he gave him no answer. The youth thrust at Peredur with his lance, and Peredur turned on him and struck him over his horse's crupper to the ground. The same thing happened to twenty-four other youths. Then came Kai and spoke to Peredur rudely and angrily. Peredur took him with his lance under the jaw, and cast him from him with a thrust, so that he broke his arm and his shoulder-blade, and he rode over him one-and-twenty times. Kai's horse returned at a wild and prancing pace. When Arthur's men saw the horse come back without his rider they rode forth in haste to the place where the encounter had taken place. At first they thought that Kai was slain, but he was brought to Arthur's tent, and Arthur caused skilful physicians to come to him. Peredur ceased not from his meditation on seeing the concourse that was around Kai. At last Gwalchmai went to Peredur, who was resting on the shaft of his spear, pondering the same thought. Gwalchmai addressed him courteously, and Peredur went with him to Arthur, who paid him great honor and respect, and they returned towards Caerlleon. The first night after Peredur came to Caerlleon, as he walked in the city after his repast, there met him Angharad Law Eurawc (Angharad with the golden hand). He said to her, "Thou art a beautiful and lovely maiden, and were it pleasing to thee, I could love thee above all women." The lady replied, "I pledge my faith that I do not love thee, nor will I ever do so." "I also pledge my faith," said Peredur, "that I will never speak a word to any Christian again until thou come to love me above all other men."



The next day Peredur went forth and came to a valley of circular form, the confines of which were rocky and wooded. In the wood there he slew a lion and overthrew the giants of the Round Valley. He rode forward the next day, and killed a serpent that lay on a gold ring and suffered no one to inhabit the country for seven miles round. He was for a long time without speaking a word to any Christian. He lost his color and his aspect through extreme longing after the court of Arthur and the society of the lady whom best he loved and of his companions. Then he proceeded forward to Arthur's court; and on the road there met him Arthur's household going on a particular errand, with Kai at their head. Peredur knew them all, but none of the household recognized him. He went by the name of the Dumb Youth, and vanquished many knights who came to Arthur's court and defied the king. And, behold, Angharad Law Eurawe met him. "I declare to Heaven, chieftain," said she, "woful is it that thou canst not speak; for, couldst thou speak, I would love thee best of all men; and by my faith, although thou canst not, I do love thee above all." "Heaven reward thee, my sister," said Peredur. "By my faith, I also do love thee." Thereupon it was known that he was Peredur. Then he held fellowship with Gwalehmai and Owain, the son of Urien, and all the household; and he remained for a time in Arthur's court. Afterward he vanquished and slew a giant who had but one eye and was called the Black Oppressor. Then he rode forward and came to the palace of the Sons of the King of Tortures, and to the Mound of Mourning. He slew the serpent Addam, and lived fourteen years with an empress whose favor he had gained by his unconquerable valor.\*

Arthur was at Caerlleon-upon-Usk, his principal palace, and in the centre of the floor of the hall were four men sitting on a carpet of velvet,—Owain, the son of Urien; Gwalehmai, the son of Gwyar; Howel, the son of Emyr Llydaw; and Peredur

\* The adventures referred to in this paragraph do not occur in Wolfram's *Parzival*, nor in Chrétien and his continuators, with the exception of the Mound of Mourning.

of the long lance. Thereupon they saw a curly-headed black maiden enter, riding on a yellow mule, with jagged thongs in her hand to urge it on, and with a rough and hideous aspect. Blacker were her face and hands than the blackest iron covered with pitch and her hue was frightful. High cheeks had she, a face lengthened downwards, and a short nose with distended nostrils. One eye was of a piercing mottled gray; the other was as black as jet, deep sunk in her head. Her teeth were long and yellow; her back was in the shape of a crook. The figure was very thin and spare, except her feet, which were of huge size. She greeted Arthur and all his household except Peredur; and to Peredur she said, "Peredur, I greet thee not, seeing that thou dost not merit it. Blind was Fate in giving thee fame and favor. When thou wast in the court of the Lame King, and didst see there the youth bearing the streaming spear from the points of which were drops of blood flowing in streams even to the hand of the youth, and many other wonders likewise, thou didst not inquire their meaning nor their cause. Hadst thou done so, the king would have been restored to health, and his dominions to peace. Whereas henceforth he will have to endure battles and conflicts, his knights will perish, and wives will be widowed, and maidens left portionless; and all this is because of thee." Then she said to Arthur, "May it please thee, lord, my dwelling is far hence, in the stately castle of which thou hast heard; therein are five hundred and sixty-six knights, and the lady whom best he loves with each; and whoever would acquire fame in arms, encounters, and conflicts, will gain it there, if he deserve it. Whoever would reach the summit of fame and honor, I know where he may find it. There is a castle on a lofty mountain, and a maiden is therein, and she is a prisoner. Whoever shall set her free, will attain the summit of the fame of the world." Thereupon she rode away. Gwalchmai said, "By my faith, I will not rest tranquilly until I have shown that I can release the maiden." Then Peredur exclaimed, "By my faith I will not rest tranquilly until I know the story and the meaning of the lance whercof the black maid spoke."

While they were equipping themselves, a knight came to the gate. He saluted Arthur and all his household except Gwalchmai; and to the latter he said, "Thou didst slay my lord by thy treachery and deceit, and that will I prove upon thee." Then Gwalchmai arose. "Behold," said he, "here is my gage against thee, to maintain either in this place or wherever else thou wilt, that I am not a traitor or deceiver." The knight said, "Before the king whom I obey, will I that my encounter with thee take place." Gwalchmai replied, "Go forward and I will follow thee."

At the dawn of day Gwalchmai came to a fortress in a valley, where he beheld a knight coming out to hunt from the other side, mounted on a spirited, snorting black palfrey. Gwalchmai saluted him, and the knight said, "Go unto my palace, if it may please thee, and tarry there to-night. Take this ring as a token to the porter; go forward to yonder tower, and therein thou wilt find my sister." Gwalchmai proceeded to the tower of the palace, and a beauteous and stately maiden sat on a chair by the fire. The maiden was glad at his coming, and welcomed him, and advanced to meet him. He went and sat beside her, and they took their repast; and while they discoursed pleasantly together, there entered a venerable hoary-headed man. "Ah, base girl!" said he, "if thou didst think that it was right for thee to entertain and sit by yonder man, thou wouldst not do so." And he withdrew his head, and went away. "Ah, chieftain!" said the maiden, "if thou wilt do as I counsel thee, thou wilt shut the door, lest the man should have a plot against thee." Upon that Gwalchmai arose, and when he came near the door, the man, with sixty others fully armed, was ascending the tower. And Gwalchmai defended the door with a chessboard, that none might enter until the man should return from the chase. Thereupon the earl arrived, and the hoary-headed man said to him, "The young girl yonder has been sitting and eating with him who slew your father." The earl said to Gwalchmai, "Ha, chieftain! it was wrong of thee to come to my court when thou knewest that thou didst slay my father; but though

we cannot avenge him, Heaven will avenge him on thee." Gwalchmai replied, "I came not here either to acknowledge or to deny having slain thy father; but I am on a message from Arthur, and therefore do I crave the space of a year until I shall return from my embassy, and then, upon my faith, I will come back unto this palace and do one of two things, — either acknowledge it or deny it." The time was granted him willingly, and he remained there that night; the next morning he rode forth. And the story relates nothing further of Gwalchmai respecting this adventure.

Peredur rode forward, seeking tidings of the black maiden. He met a clergyman, who upbraided him for bearing arms on Good Friday. Peredur was moved by his words, and went afoot to a castle, where the same clergyman entertained him. He remained with him four days. At last, after many perilous adventures, he came to the Castle of Wonders. When he came to the hall, the door was open and he entered. He beheld a chessboard in the hall, and the chessmen were playing against each other by themselves. But the side that he favored lost the game, and thereupon the others set up a shout, as though they had been living men. Peredur was wroth, and took the chessmen in his lap and cast the chessboard into the lake. When he had done this, the black maiden came in, and said to him, "The welcome of Heaven be not unto thee. Thou hadst rather do evil than good." Peredur said, "What complaint hast thou against me, maiden?" She replied, "Thou hast occasioned unto the empress the loss of her chessboard, which she would not have lost for all her empire. But the way in which thou mayest recover the chessboard is to repair to a castle where is a black man who lays waste the dominions of the empress; if thou canst slay him, thou wilt recover the chessboard." Peredur slew the black man, and when he returned to the palace, he found the black maiden there. "Ah, maiden!" said Peredur, "where is the empress?" She replied, "Thou wilt not see her unless thou dost slay the monster that is in yonder forest. It is a stag as swift as the swiftest bird. He has one horn in his forehead,

as long as the shaft of a spear." The stag attacked Peredur, who let him pass by him, and as he did so, he smote off his head with his sword. While he was looking at the head of the stag, he saw a lady on horseback coming towards him. She reproached him for killing the stag. Her anger could be appeased only if Peredur would go to a grove and challenge a man three times to fight. Peredur did so, and a black man appeared, mounted upon a bony horse; and both he and his horse were clad in huge rusty armor. They fought; but as often as Peredur cast the black man to the earth, he would jump again into his saddle. Peredur dismounted and drew his sword. Thereupon the black man disappeared with Peredur's horse and his own, so that he could not gain sight of him a second time. Peredur went along the mountain, and on the other side of it he beheld a castle in the valley, wherein was a river. He went into the castle, and there he saw a lame gray-headed man sitting on one side of the hall, with Gwalchmai beside him. Peredur beheld his horse, which the black man had taken, in the same stall with that of Gwalchmai. They were glad concerning Peredur; and he seated himself on the other side of the hoary-headed man. Then a yellow-haired youth came, who bent upon the knee before Peredur and besought his friendship. He said, "Lord, it was I that came in the form of the black maiden to Arthur's court, and when thou didst throw down the chessboard, and when thou didst slay the black man who laid waste the dominions of the empress, and when thou didst slay the stag, and when thou didst go to fight the black man in the grove. I came with the bloody head in the salver, and with the lance that streamed with blood from the point to the hand, all along the shaft; and the head was thy cousin's, who was killed by the sorceresses of Gloucester, who also lamed thine uncle; and I am thy cousin. There is a prediction that thou art to avenge these things."

Then Peredur and Gwalchmai took counsel, and sent to Arthur and his household to beseech them to come against the sorceresses; and they began to fight with them. One of the sorceresses slew one of Arthur's men before Peredur's face, and Peredur

bade her forbear. But she slew a man before Peredur's face a second time, and a second time he forbade her. The third time the sorceress slew a man before the face of Peredur, and then Peredur drew his sword, and smote her on the helmet, and all her head-armor was split in two parts. And she set up a cry, and desired the other sorceresses to flee, telling them that this was Peredur, the man who had learned chivalry with them and by whom they were destined to be slain. Then Arthur and his household fell upon the sorceresses, and slew them all. And thus is it related concerning the Castle of Wonders.

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10. (Cf. p. 255.) — The following lines are taken from Simrock's remarks on the legendary tales of John the Baptist.\*

Much reverence was shown to the head of John the Baptist at an early time. When it was found during the reign of the Arian emperor Valens, it was in the possession of monks belonging to the sect of the Macedonians, the followers of Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople in the fourth century. The head could not be taken to Constantinople, since the mules would not carry it any farther than to the village of Cosilai, near Chalcedon. When the orthodox emperor Theodosius ordered it to be conveyed thence to the capital, there lived at Cosilai a pious matron of that sect, who guarded the sacred head, and resisted its being carried away with all her power. The emperor forbade taking the relic from her by force, and induced the woman by kindness to yield to his demands. She yielded in the firm conviction that the relic, as in the reign of Valens, could not be removed from its place. Yet the head was conveyed to a suburb of Constantinople, and a magnificent temple was built for it. The woman remained at Cosilai; but a priest of Persian descent, who also had guarded the sacred head, followed it to Constantinople, when he saw that it did not resist the emperor's will. Then the

\* Page 344 in Simrock's introduction to his translation of *Parzival and Titurel*.

priest, who formerly was a Macedonian, became a Catholic, and daily presented holy offerings over the relic.

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11. (Cf. p. 274.)—"It is curious how this last particular has lived to this day in the 'Ballad of Lord Lovel,' which is still sung by the country people of England:—

'And out of her breast there grew a red rose,  
And out of his breast a brier.' " \*

\* Bayard Taylor's *Studies in German Literature*, p. 78.

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